



THE ISLAMIC BULLETIN

Issue 20

IN THIS ISSUE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR	2
ISLAM MAKES INROADS IN ITALY.....	3
BRITAIN'S PRIME MINISTER PRAISES ISLAM.....	4
BARBRI DEMOLISHER ACCEPTS ISLAM.....	4
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL NAMES OF ALLAH	5
DEATH IS COMING.....	6
AL-BANNA'S LETTER TO A MUSLIM STUDENT....	7
WOMEN IN ISLAM- FROM SKIRTS TO ABAYAS.....	9
HOW I EMBRACED ISLAM	11
THE QURAN & SCIENCE- THE MOSQUITO	14
BENEFITS OF SUJUD.....	15
THE ORIGIN OF ARABIC NUMERALS	15
STORIES OF THE SAHABA- OMAR (RA).....	16
SAYINGS OF THE PROPHET.....	18
ISLAMIC DIETARY LAWS- HONEY.....	19
KID'S CORNER- TRUE STORY.....	20
COOK'S CORNER- RUZ BUKHARI	21
THIS IS ISLAM	21
THE STRANGER.....	23

THE ISLAMIC BULLETIN

Published by the
Islamic Community of
Northern California
A Non-Profit Corporation
P.O. Box 410186
San Francisco, CA 94141-0186
E-Mail:
info@islamicbulletin.org
Website: <http://www.islamicbulletin.org>

DEAR READERS,

Welcome to the latest edition of The Islamic Bulletin. We would like to thank you for your loyal support over the years. We hope you enjoy our modest efforts to spread the Word of Allah through this newsletter.

In this issue, we have many interesting articles. There is an article on the growth of Islam in Italy, and one on Britain's Prime Minister's praise about the beauty of Islam. There is a story about a man from India who converted to Islam after participating in the destruction of a Masjid. We are very excited to publish the 99 Names of Allah. You should try to read them every day. Of course, if you were to memorize the 99 names in Arabic it would be even easier to remember and recite them every day. "A Letter to a Muslim Student," which was written more than 50 years ago, yet still equally relevant and moving today, is one of our favorite articles in this issue. In "How I Embraced Islam," a Southern woman tells about her moving story that led her to Islam and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Also inside this issue, read "Death Is Coming" and learn to cook Ruz Bukhari, a traditional main dish in Hadramout, South Yemen, plus much more.

In recent months, people have inquired about the origins of The Islamic Bulletin. Here is a brief history of the publication: The first Islamic Bulletin, 14 pages long, was published in 1991. It was a simple, stapled newsletter. The graphics for that first issue were put on with tape. We made only 200 copies of the original issue. By the second issue, although we had printed 400, we still did not have enough for all of the people who wanted it! In only a few years, the Bulletin exploded in popularity, with a vast number of people responding positively.

Now, almost 10 years later, we print 15,000 copies of each issue, which barely meets the demand. Our readers, around the country and globe, are excited and appreciate the information on Islam which we provide, and the nonpolitical message of faith and unity we try to communicate. With all of this success comes a lot of work, however. Not only do we face purchase, production, printing, mailing, and postage expenses for the Bulletin, but we also provide Qurans and Islamic literature to prison inmates and to the ever increasing number of new converts. We currently send this Bulletin to approximately 3,000 men and women incarcerated in American jails who have asked for our assistance in learning about Allah and the message of the Holy Prophet (pbuh).

The Islamic Bulletin is completely self-supporting. We do not receive any grants or funding except from you, our readers; nor do we take any commercial ads in order to retain the purity of the publication. With this in mind, we are putting out a very strong appeal for your help. We need volunteers! The Bulletin takes a lot of love, devotion, attention, and work to produce. We ask that you share some of your energy, enthusiasm, and creativity with us. There are numerous things to do; from proof-reading and helping with mailings, to assisting us with our Web Site. With your help, Insh'Allah, the Bulletin can grow to be even more successful and reach more people.

Always feel free to contact us with your suggestions, and we thank those who have expressed enjoyment in this publication, we thank you. Please remember us in your prayers and Duha (supplications) and may Allah accept and strengthen us all in our continuing efforts.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Asalamu Alaikum,



Dear Editor:

I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoy reading the Islamic Bulletin. I have been following it now for a couple of years. I would like to relate to you a very interesting experience I had while traveling from Oregon to California.

I, along with six other Muslim brothers, left out home in Corvallis, Oregon to attend an Islamic meeting in California. While passing Oakland, California, our van broke down near a limousine rental place. Two of the people working at the limo place saw us stranded with the hood of our van raised. Although it was a Saturday night, the busiest night in the limousine business, these two men offered to drive us in their limo, without charge, to our destination.

We asked to be driven to the nearest Mosque. Because we were unfamiliar with the Bay Area, we took out the 'List of Mosques Sheet' I had saved from your last edition of the Islamic Bulletin. The nearest mosque to us happened to be the Oakland Islamic Center on 31st Street and Telegraph. On our drive to the Masjid, we began to speak about Islam to the two men. They both said that they were Seventh Day Adventist and very happy with their religion. We then thanked the men for driving us and gifted them with a container of honey.

When we arrived at the Masjid, the two men still refused to charge us. A Bayan (talk) was being given inside the Masjid, so we invited the two men to listen to the talk. Although one was a bit hesitant because he wanted to return to work, the other agreed to attend and convinced his buddy to join him and only 'listen'.

After the talk (Bayan) was over the two men were so touched by the lecture and happy with Islam and the prophet Muhammed (saw), that they accepted Islam. So not only were we blessed with participating in them becoming Muslim, but we were fortunate enough to find a mechanic at the Masjid who fixed our van.

Mohamed Awad

Corvallis, Oregon

Asalamu Alaikum,

Dear Editor:

May Allah reward all those responsible for this interesting, informative publication. I found the articles thought provoking and stimulating.

I do feel compelled to respond to the somewhat offensive letter by the brother on Hijab in your last issue. I spent a lot of time trying to respond in a way that will not Insha Allah create further conflict.

The brother is right in reminding sisters of their need to cover. However, this letter is symptomatic of the gross over preoccupation of the Muslim Community at large men and women with this issue of Hijab. Hijab is a crucial aspect of our deen. It is necessary for fulfilling our duty to Allah, for our self-protection, for feeling proud to be Muslim this is undeniable. But surely, it is the "Inner Hijab" of both men and women that is of primary importance. You know, following all the other teachings of the Quran and Sunnah, being a kindhearted person, helping the needy, performing dawah you remember?

Ultimately, we are all only answerable to Allah for any of our actions. It really does not concern anyone else, especially not a stranger as this brother is to the women he mentions. The brother is being lighthearted and playful which is fine. I too very playfully do wonder how this well meaning brother is able to have studied "insufficient hijab" to such a level that he has actually invented categories: 'yo-yo hijab', 'saran wrap' etc. Yet he is still able to continue to keep his gaze lowered as Allah commands. I don't wish to turn this into a gender battle but isn't it funny how you hardly ever read articles on how Muslim men should lower their gaze? Yet this is as important a part of "Hijab" as any headscarf or jilbab you can buy.

But on a very serious note, as your editorial points out, Hijab like so many other issues is a personal, spiritual journey. We are all at different stages on that journey. It is not easy to live in a non-Muslim country and walk around looking very different to the mainstream population. Muslims do face many different kinds of harassment because of the way they dress. No one puts on a scarf and says "Yippee, here I go can't wait to look different from everyone around me." It may take weeks, months, or years of coming to some kind of inner peace with what Allah has asked of us and what Society demands. Again, this is true of many of Allah's commandments, so why obsess about Hijab? Who are we to judge anyone's level of faith or commitment to Islam? Where are we finding the time to do this when our Ummah is in such disgraceful disarray, and Muslims are being persecuted across the globe? Is Hijab to be the only identity for a Muslim woman? If I have said anything to offend, I apologize. Allah alone knows best.

Shereen Hussain

I am a Muslim Woman by Jenn Zaghoul	Note, I speak perfect English Et un petit peu de Francais aussi
I am a Muslim woman Feel free to ask me why When I walk I walk with dignity When I speak I do not lie.	I'm majoring in Linguistics So you need not speak slowly.
I am a Muslim woman Not all of me you'll see But what you should appreciate Is that the choice I make is free.	I run my own small business Every cent I earn is mine I drive my Chevy to school & work And no, that's not a crime!
I'm not plagued with depression I'm neither cheated nor abused I don't envy other women And I'm certainly not confused.	You often stare as I walk by You don't understand my veil But peace and power I have found As I am equal to any male!
	I am a Muslim woman So please don't pity me For God has guided me to truth And now I'm finally free!

NEED TO CONTACT US?

Web Address: www.islamicbulletin.org

E-Mail: info@islamicbulletin.org

Editor, Islamic Bulletin

P.O. Box 410186

San Francisco, CA 94141-0186, USA



IN CATHOLIC ITALY, ISLAM MAKES INROADS



PALERMO, Sicily Italy- In this very Catholic country, there have always been other religions: a sprinkling of Waldensian Protestants in the north, traces of Islam in Sicily, well-established but small Jewish neighborhoods in Rome, Venice, and other big cities. But for the first time in centuries, a minority religion is set to become a major player in Italy's future. Fueled largely by immigration from North Africa, the Middle East, and Albania, Islam is now the second-largest faith in what is still

a nation that is 94 percent Catholic. Italy's demographic changes provide a modern challenge, not only for these two world religions, but also for this nation positioned at the crossroads of continents, faith, and history. With the growth has come some tension, most recently when some Catholic-Muslim marriages ended in widely reported battles over custody and religious education of the children. The Italian Bishops Council responded by issuing a public warning against marriages between the two religions, citing "too much distance in culture". But that reaction has drawn scorn from people like Amina Donatella Samina. Born in Rome, raised nominally Catholic, Samina has been a practicing Muslim since 1993, four years after marrying her Moroccan husband at city hall. "The church has a history of trying to destroy all that is different from it," said Samina, who wore a white and blue scarf on her head as she sipped a cappuccino at Rome's Caffe Doria.

Citing the eighth-century arrival of the first Muslims in Sicily, the mother of three said her newfound faith has only enhanced her connection to her native Mediterranean identity. "We're in the middle of everything here: Arab, Spanish, French, Slav. We need to overcome these narrow views so many have about who is Italian." A walk around Palermo offers support for her views. Several Catholic churches look suspiciously like mosques, having been transformed into churches when Christians retook Sicily in the year 991, after two centuries of Tunisian rule left a lasting Islamic stamp on the island. Over the past millennium, however, the religious life of Italy and its islands has been the domain of the Catholic Church. "For hundreds of years, Italy has been based around one dominant religion," said Maria Maciotti, a sociology professor who has studied immigration in Italy for more than 20 years. "We're not very accustomed to having another significant religious presence here." There are now nearly 1 million Muslims in this country of 57 million. Though still smaller than the Islamic presence in other Western European countries, the number has doubled in just 10 years.

Twenty eight years ago, Rosario Pasquini (Danilo) was a heavy smoker, drank more whisky than was good for him and led what he now describes as a nightmare existence, tormented by the stress of having to succeed in his job as a lawyer in the busy northern city of Milan. Pasquini, born in Fiume in 1934, graduated from the University of Milan in 1957 and became a Muslim in 1974. Now in his 60s, Pasquini calls himself Abdurrahman. He leads the Friday Prayer at the Mosque of Il Misericordioso and is a teacher of Arabic and Islamic culture. He is also the author of *L'Islam Credo*, *Pilastri*, *Vertice e Perfezione* and *Muhammad, L'Inviato di Dio*.

Abdurrahman still lives in Milan, but he has traded his lawyer's briefcase for something that gives him more satisfaction. He is now editor of a newspaper called "Il Messaggero del Islam", (The Messenger of Islam) an eight page tabloid written for the growing numbers of Italians who, like the former lawyer himself, decided to convert to the Muslim faith. "Every day, people come in wanting to know more about Islam and the conversion process," said Abdurrahman, who edits his newspaper from an office at Milan's Islamic Center. "Yesterday it was one, today there were two. They come from all over, from different classes and backgrounds, and they all have different reasons for doing it." Abdurrahman himself received support and understanding from his own family. He says, "They took the view that I was old enough to make my mind up for myself, and let me get on with it. In fact, my mother,

who is 93 years old and has remained a Catholic, recently said to me: 'I Praise Allah, because if you had continued to live the way you did before you converted, you would be dead by now.'"

He continues, "At the time I was prey to a terrible mental stress, brought on by the competitiveness that is so prevalent in our type of society. After a long period of searching, I finally arrived at Islam which says that no one except God has the right to judge and dominate other men. This is what I was looking for. For me it represented a liberation from a society which believes itself to be free, but which instead forces its members to bow under the yoke of many, many different demands."

Like many converts, Abdurrahman embraced his new faith whole heartily. He learned Arabic so he could read the Quran and participate in mosque life without having to rely on translations. His command of the language has become so good that he now teaches it. The former lawyer's interpretation of the Muslim faith is strict and unyielding. As well as announcements of births, marriages and conversions, his Muslim newspaper carries advice on how Italian converts should behave. One of the factors that contributed to his conversion was a meeting that developed into a strong friendship with Jordanian born, Ali Abu Shwaima, then a medical student, now the director of the Milan Islamic Center. Shwaima's wife is also Italian. Like Pasquini, she decided to convert to Islam and changed her name from Paola Moretti to Khadija, after the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) first wife. Today, she recalls with some amusement the first time she ventured out into the streets wearing a veil. That was 28 years ago, when Italians were far less used to seeing Muslims than they are now. "I felt everyone's eyes on me. It was rather embarrassing," she said. "I could hear the other women in the supermarket whispering things like, 'who is she, a nun?' Or 'Maybe she belongs to some sect.' But that kind of attitude no longer bothers me, she said. I'm sure of the choice I made. It certainly wasn't easy at the beginning, when I made my conversion. But wearing the veil is a duty for women. I couldn't accept one part of the Quran and not the other."

Guiuseppina, now known as Fatima, was a Roman Catholic nun, studying theology and living in a convent in Modena in central Italy. She began reading the Quran, and as her interest grew she started having doubts about her own religion and vocation. She took to visiting the Islamic Center in Milan, and finally after a great deal of soul searching, she renounced her vows and converted to Islam. Today, she is married to a fellow Muslim.

Daniela was born in Sicily and became a convert nine years ago, when she married an Egyptian. She willingly obeys all the rules of her new faith. "When I go out, I always wear a scarf over my head and I keep my legs and arms covered," she said. "A woman should keep all parts of feminine beauty covered, because only her husband has the right to see them. It seems perfectly right to me." In spite of her acceptance of what other Western Women might see as limitations, Daniela claims her relationship with her husband is one of absolute equality.

Franco Leccesi, who prefers to be known as Omar, claims the precise rules laid down by Islam help a person gain greater self discipline, which in turn leads to physical and spiritual improvement. Looking back to the old days before he converted seven years ago, he said: "I always used to try to impose my own self discipline, but it never lasted very long," added the 42 year Neapolitan artist, "but in the past six years I've noticed a dramatic improvement in myself. If you pray five times a day it also forces you to break off from the daily treadmill. It makes you stop and reflect and prevents you from becoming an automation, who lives his life mechanically. One thing that strikes me very deeply is the dramatic difference between old people in many Muslim countries, and those in the West," he added. "There, the elderly are often far more lucid and energetic, right up until old age, they often have remarkable physical and mental powers in comparison with people of the same age over



over here. It's largely due to the lifestyle they learn from childhood, which enables them to eliminate stress and to do without the kind of things that poison our systems. We westerners have lost so much of the spiritual dimension of our lives. It's as though we've fallen into a deep sleep. We're living in a world that is so empty- it's very frightening to contemplate."

Like most Italians, Leccesi was brought up a Roman Catholic, but for years he felt that something was missing from his life. He says, "When I read the Bible, I totally agreed with everything it said, but I saw that practice was very different from the theory. People didn't behave in a way that did (the bible) justice", he said. A series of visits to the Naples mosques, together with the Italian friend who had already converted to the Islamic faith, convinced Leccesi that becoming a Muslim would give him what he defines as "the something extra" that he was looking for.

His friends were skeptical at first. "It was quite hard at the beginning. People were upset because it seemed such a strange thing to do. To them, it was a step into the unknown. Some of my more intelligent friends looked at me with a sort of admiration, even though they still thought I was a bit crazy," said Leccesi. His wife found the decision hard to accept at first. For a start, she had to get used to calling the man she married as Franco by his new name of Omar. "Now, she sometimes calls me Franco and sometimes Omar, though I really don't mind which," said Leccesi. "You can't force people to believe the things you do, and I've never tried with her, but even she is showing more interest than she once did. You could now describe her as a sympathizer."

More to the point, Muslims account for 36.5 percent of the 1.5 million immigrants in Italy and Islam has overtaken Catholicism, at 27.4 percent, as the largest religious group among newcomers. Perhaps here more than elsewhere, the crossover questions of immigration and religion are vexing a nation where St. Peter's Basilica and Europe's largest mosque are just a city bus ride apart.

Magdi Allam, who covers immigration and Muslim issues for the newspaper La Repubblica, said Italy has a wide mix of Muslims that mirrors the diversity of the faith around the world: There are some 10,000 Italian-born converts, a largely moderate flock from Morocco, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, and vast numbers of arrivals from Albania. The Muslim community has not received official government recognition - bestowed on an array of smaller faiths, including Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews, and Buddhists - that would guarantee state-approved religious education, finance mosques and associations, and legalize Muslim marriage rites.

The government grants official recognition to other religions under a 1984 modification of the Concordat, an agreement between the Italian state and the Vatican signed in 1929 to give special status to Roman Catholicism. Native-born converts, the foreign embassies of Morocco and Saudi Arabia - whose royal family largely financed the building of the mammoth mosque in Rome - and other Muslim groups have been bickering for more than two years over who will negotiate the terms of the agreement. Once these differences are resolved, the Italian brand of Islam can play a major role in the religion's future across the globe, said Hamza Roberto Piccardo, who has been a Muslim since 1984. "In no country in Europe has there been such a rapid growth," said Piccardo, adding that the number of mosques and Islamic cultural centers has gone from 12 to 400 in the past 16 years. "Italy is the bridge between Africa, the Middle East, and Europe that make for a particular kind of Islam here." But as the presence expands, so does the possibility for conflict. Piccardo said "Islamaphobia" is part of a Western penchant to find new enemies in the post-Cold War world. But Piccardo concedes that Italy's history raises the stakes. "The idea of Christianity is dominant here," said Piccardo, who concurs with the church's effort to dissuade intermarriage. "We are a family: Jews, Christians and Muslims; the problems within a family are always more difficult."

Tony Blair Calls on Britain to Reach Out for More Understanding of Islam

"There is a lot of misunderstanding about Islam. It is a deeply reflective, peaceful, a very beautiful religious faith," stated British Prime Minister Tony Blair, in an interview with The Muslim News, a United Kingdom based newspaper. The Prime Minister stated that he "owns two copies of the Quran and carries one with him whenever he can," a habit he picked up from Chelsea Clinton. He also expressed his respect for Islam by saying that he "draws

inspiration from it. If you read the Qur'an, it is so clear, the concept of love and fellowship as the guiding spirits of humanity."

The public statements made by the Prime Minister illustrating his appreciation of Islam, and his call for the necessity of Britain to "reach out and build greater understanding of what Islam is and means and the values that underpin it," are an illustration of the growing recognition of Islam. Mr. Blair also predicted that there would be more Muslim Members of Parliament in the next election.

In fact he said that he would be, "very surprised if the Labour Party didn't have any Muslim candidates standing in winnable seats in the next election."



This interview with The Muslim News and Mr. Blair's words of praise came after Britain sent the first ever official, British Hajj Delegation to offer consular assistance to British pilgrims. Lord Ahmed of Rotherham, who was nominated by Blair and became the first ever Muslim in the House of Lords, headed the Hajj Delegation. "The acknowledgment by the British government of its Muslim citizens is greatly appreciated and respected by the American Muslim community. We look for the increased inclusion of Muslims in public affairs and a more proactive role in society," states Aly Abuzaakouk, Executive Director of the American Muslim Council.

Demolisher of Babri Masjid Accepts Islam

Ayodhya, India - Shive Prasad is a resident of Faisabad, where Ayodhya is situated. He was given the responsibility to guide four thousand Kar Sevaks in the demolition of the Babri mosque. It was he who trained four thousand people on how



to carry out the demolition. His whole family was actively involved in demolishing the Babri Masjid. Soon after the demolition of the mosque, Shive Prasad felt a depression in his heart. He had no peace of mind. He felt that he had committed a great sin. This event took place eight years ago. On Dec. 6, 1999 the same Shive Prasad was seeking forgiveness from Allah for his cruel act seven years back.

He was fasting (non-obligatory) and regretting the act with tears and was seeking forgiveness from Allah in his prayers. Yes! Shive Prasad has embraced Islam. He has changed his name to Mohammed Mustafa. In 1997, he went to the city of Sharjah in order to seek employment. But even at work his mind was restless. On Dec. 4, 1998 as he was walking along the streets of Sharjah, he happened to hear a speech in Hindi before the Friday prayer held in a mosque. When he heard the speech, he felt something was different. He wanted to listen to the complete speech. The message about Allah created a revolution in his mind. He continued to listen to such speeches thereafter. The revolution in his heart was completed. (All praise be to God!)

He has forfeited the ignorance and chosen the righteous path. When Shive Prasad embraced Islam, he was driven out by his upset family members. Now, he is praying to God that his family member will choose the righteous path as he did.

Mohammed Mustafa has received continuous threats to be killed if he returns to India. But Mohammed Mustafa says firmly that he will never turn away from Islam- the righteous path even if death comes his way. Having learnt 17 Surahs in the Holy Qur'an, he is anxious to complete the learning of the entire Quran. Mustafa's ambition is to become a true Islamic preacher and bring more people to Islam. If Allah wishes, Mustafa's ambition will be fulfilled. The very same hands which demolished the Babri Masjid will build it up again, InshAllah.

The Most Beautiful Names of Allah

The first part of the Muslim confession of faith (the shahada) is the basis for the concept of God in Islam. The Muslim bears witness that: "There is no god but God", or "no divinity but the (one) Divinity". The revealed Scripture of Islam, the Qur'an, is like a vast commentary on this simple statement, drawing from it all its implications for human life and thought. This conception of the Deity is strictly monotheistic and unitarian. God alone has absolute being, totally independent and totally self-sufficient. Whatever exists or ever could exist does so by His will. He has no "partner" either in creating the universe or in maintaining it in existence. The Qur'an tells us:

"Say: He is Allah, The One, Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begets not, nor is He begotten, and there is none like unto Him". (Quran 112: 1-4)

It tells us also that: "Verily, when He intends a thing to be, He but says into it -Be!; and it is." (Quran 36:82)

He is Al-Ahad, The One, absolute unity. This is in sharp contrast to the Christian conception of the Trinity. The One cannot be divided, nor can it be diminished or "humanized" by incarnation in any created form. God does not become His own creature, in fact He does not "become" anything; He is. To sum up: the God of Islam is transcendent, the All-Powerful and All-knowing Creator and Lawgiver; though at the same time infinitely merciful, generous and forgiving. Man, His creature and His servant, stands before Him without intermediary or intercessor, meeting Him through prayer during this brief life on earth and meeting Him face-to-face when life is over. In Islam, God does not embody Himself in any human being or make Himself accessible through idols and images.

But He does make Himself accessible through His revealed Names. We, in our small way, can exemplify these qualities and attributes in our daily lives. Inspired and aided by the Most Merciful we can show mercy. Inspired and aided by the One who creates Guidance we can guide our fellow men and women. Through His Light our lives may be illuminated. What we cannot hope to exemplify fully is His Perfection, but we can love it wholeheartedly. We love those who are kind to us, and God is Kindness itself. We love generosity when it is directed towards us, and He is The Generous. We are irresistibly drawn towards beauty, and He is the source of all Beauty. Above all, we love Perfection, and we seek it in vain in this imperfect world. We find it in God, who is alone perfect, and the Quran tells us that "the believers are strong in their love of God". At the end of the road, sign-posted by the divine Names, the Muslim rejoices in an overwhelming love for the One who awaits us at journey's end.

An explanation of the meanings of the 99 divine attributes of God which the Prophet (SAW) said, "Allah has 99 names, one 100 minus one. The one who enumerates them enters Paradise."

1. Allah	God, The One other than whom There is no God	51. Ash-Shahid	The Witness
2. Ar-Rahman	The Most Merciful	52. Al-Haqq	The Ultimate Truth
3. Ar-Rahim	The Most Compassionate	53. Al-Wakil	The Ultimate Trustee
4. Al-Malik	The Sovereign Supreme	54. Al-Qawiyy	The Possessor of All Strength
5. Al-Quddus	The Most Holy One	55. Al-Matin	The Firm One
6. As-Salam	The Sound One with whom all salvation rests	56. Al-Waliyy	The Governor
7. Al-Mu'min	The Giver of Faith, Safety, and Security	57. Al-Hamid	The Ultimately Praiseworthy One
8. Al-Muhaymin	The Protector and Guardian	58. Al-Muhsi	The Absolute Reckoner
9. Al-Aziz	The Incomparable and Unparalleled One	59. Al-Muhyi	The Giver of Life
10. Al-Jabbar	The Compeller	60. Al-Mubdi	The Originator
11. Al-Mutakabbir	The One Supreme in Pride and Greatness	61. Al-Muid	The Restorer
12. Al-Khaliq	The Creator	62. Al-Mumit	The Taker of Life
13. Al-Bari	The Executive and The Maker	63. Al-Hayy	The Ever-Living
14. Al-Musawwir	The Fashioner	64. Al-Qayyum	The Self-Existing One
15. Al-Ghaffar	The Very Forgiving One	65. Al-Waahid	He Who is Uniquely One
16. Al-Qahhar	The Dominating One	66. Al-Maajid	The Glorified One
17. Al-Wahhab	The Giver of All	67. Al-Wajid	The Founder Who Has No Needs
18. Ar-Razzaq	The One Who Provides All Sustenance	68. As-Samad	The Satisfier of All needs
19. Al-Fattah	The Opener	69. Al-Qadir	The All-Powerful
20. Al-Alim	The Omniscient One	70. Al-Muqtadir	The Bestower of Power upon Things
21. Al-Qabid	The One Who Takes Away	71. Al-Muqaddim	The One Who Causes Advancement
22. Al-Basit	The One Who Gives Abundantly	72. Al-Mu'akhhir	The One Who Causes Retardation
23. Al-Khafid	The Abaser	73. Al-Awwal	The First
24. Ar-Rafi'	The Exalter	74. Al-Akhir	The Last
25. Al-Mu'izz	The One Who Raises to Honor	75. Ad-Dahir	The Manifest One
26. Al-Mudhill	The One Who Humiliates	76. Al-Batin	The Hidden One
27. As-Sami	The Hearing of All	77. Al-Wali	He Who has Charge Over All
28. Al-Basir	The Seer of All	78. Al-Muta'ali	The Highly Exalted One
29. Al-Hakam	The Arbiter Supreme (Judge)	79. Al-Barr	The Beneficent One
30. Al-Adl	The Just One	80. At-Tawwab	He Who Accepts Repentance
31. Al-Latif	The Subtle	81. Al-Muntaqim	The Avenger
32. Al-Khabir	The All-Aware	82. Al-'Afuww	The Forgiver
33. Al-Halim	The Forbearing	83. Ar-Ra'uf	The Most Compassionate
34. Al-Adim	The Magnificent	84. Malik Al-Mulk	The Owner of All
35. Al-Ghafur	The Forgiver and Hider of Faults	85. Dhul-Jalal Wal-ikram	Lord of Majesty and Bounty
36. Ash-Shakur	The Rewarder of Thankfulness	86. Al-Muqsit	The Upholder of Equity
37. Al-'Aliyy	The Highest	87. Al-Jami	The Gatherer
38. Al-Kabir	The Truly Grand One	88. Al-Ghani	The Independently Rich
39. Al-Hafid	The Preserver	89. Al-Mughni	The Enriching One
40. Al-Muqit	The Nourisher and The Watcher	90. Al-Mani	The Preventer of Harm
41. Al-Hasib	The Accounter	91. Ad-Darr	The Creator of The Harmful
42. Al-Jalil	The Mighty	92. An-Nafi	The Creator of Good
43. Al-Karim	The Generous	93. An-Nur	The Light
44. Ar-Raqib	The Ever Watchful over everything	94. Al-Hadi	The One who creates Guidance
45. Al-Mujib	The Responder	95. Al-Badi'a	The Originator of Creation
46. Al-Wasi	The All- Comprehending	96. Al-Baqi	The Everlasting One
47. Al-Hakim	The Perfect Wise	97. Al-Warith	The Ultimate Inheritor
48. Al-Wadud	The Loving One	98. Ar-Rashid	The Righteous Teacher
49. Al-Majid	The Majestic One	99. As-Sabur	The Patient One
50. Al-Ba'ith	The Resurrector		

Death is Coming

It was early in the morning at four,
When death knocked my bedroom door,
Who is there? The sleeping one cried.
I'm Izrael, let me inside.

At once, the man began to shiver,
As one sweating in deadly fever,
He shouted to his sleeping wife,
Don't let him take away my life.

Please go away, O Angel of Death!
Leave me alone, I'm not ready yet.
My family on me depends,
Give me a chance, O please prepense!

The angel knocked again and again,
Friend! I'll take your life without a pain,
This your soul Allah requires,
I come not with my own desire.

Bewildered, the man began to cry,
O Angel I'm so afraid to die,
I'll give you gold and be your slave,
Don't send me to the unlit grave.

Let me in, O Friend! The Angel said,
Open the door, get up from your bed.
If you do not allow me in,
I will walk through it, like a jinn.

The man held a gun in his right hand,
Ready to defy the Angel's stand.
I'll point my gun, towards your head,
You dare come in, I'll shoot you dead.

By now the Angel was in the room,
Saying, O Friend! prepare for you doom.
Foolish man, Angels never die,
Put down your gun and do not sigh.

Why are you afraid! Tell me O man,
To die according to Allah's plan?
Come smile at me, do not be grim,
Be Happy to return to Him.

O Angel! I bow my head in shame,
I had no time to take Allah's Name.
From morning till dusk, I made my wealth,
Not even caring for my health.

Allah's command I never obeyed
Nor five times a day I ever prayed.
A Ramadan came and a Ramadan went,
But no time had I to repent.

The Hajj was already obligatory on me,
But I would not part with my money.
All charities I did ignore,
Taking usury more and more.

Sometimes I sipped my favorite wine,
With flirting women I sat to dine.
O Angel! I appeal to you,
Spare my life for a year or two.

The Laws of Quran I will obey,
I'll begin my prayers this very day.
My Fast and Hajj, I will complete,
And keep away from self conceit.

I will refrain from usury,
And give all my wealth to charity,
Wine and wenches I will detest,
Allah's oneness I will attest.

We Angels do what Allah demands,
We cannot go against His commands.
Death is ordained for everyone,
Father, mother, daughter or son.

I'm afraid this moment is your last,
Now be reminded, of your past!
I do understand your fears,
But it is now too late for tears.

You lived in this world, 2 score and more,
Never did you, your people adore.
Your parents, you did not obey,
Hungry beggars, you turned away.

Your two ill-gotten, female offspring,
In night-clubs, for livelihood they sing.
You ignored the Prayer call Azan,
Nor did you read the Holy Quran.

Breaking promises all your life,
Backbiting friends, and causing strife.
From hoarded goods, profits you made,
And your poor workers, you underpaid.

Horses and cards were your leisure,
Moneymaking was your pleasure.
You ate vitamins and grew more fat,
With the very sick, you never sat.

A pint of blood you never gave,
Which could a little baby save.
O Human, you have done enough wrong,
You bought good properties for a song.

When the farmers appealed to you,
You did not have mercy, tis true.
Paradise for you? I cannot tell,
Undoubtedly you will dwell in hell.

There is no time for you to repent,
I'll take your soul for which I am sent.

The ending however, is very sad,
Eventually the man became mad
With a cry, he jumped out of bed,
And suddenly, he fell down dead.

O Reader! Take moral from here,
You never know, your end may be near
Change your living and make amends
For heaven, on your deeds depends.

AL-BANNA'S LETTER TO A MUSLIM STUDENT

LETTER TO A MUSLIM STUDENT is the English translation of a letter that Hasan al-Banna, (1906-1949), born in Egypt into a family of scholars, wrote to a student who was studying in the West with his wife. The sincere advice contained in this letter is drawn from the perennial values and ethos of Islam. It reminds the addressee, and indeed all Muslims, that the first and foremost goal in a Muslim's life is to please God and live in accordance with His sacred law. Also, it brings home that studying ought not to be an end in itself or for seeking material gain; a Muslim ought to excel in his or her study in order to work for Islam and benefit humanity.

My brother in Islam (whom may Allah guard and protect):

I praise Allah for there is no god but Him. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon Muhammad, who was sent as a mercy to all of humanity, upon his family, Companions and on all those who hold fast to the Shari'a¹, until the Day of Judgement.

May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon you when you travel with a proper intention and a noble purpose, and when you return with a sound endeavor and to a dedicated cause.

May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon you as you serve Islam with the finest fruits of science and the best of knowledge.

Dearest brother, you will be amongst people you have not known before and characters you are not accustomed to. In you they will see the example of a Muslim. So make sure they see in you the best example and the finest image, in order for them to understand that the word 'Muslim' embodies virtue and nobility.

With you is a precious trust, that is your righteous wife, appreciate this. Towards her be a trustworthy companion. Provide her with comfort and happiness. Share with her felicity, without being careless in acquiring your rights and negligent in performing your duties.

Read these few words that are borne out by my love and sincerity for you, as an elder brother expressing for his brother and sister the best wishes and the happiest life.

1. O my brother, excel in your observance of Allah (swt)² in all your dealings. Understand that He (swt) keeps watch over you, sees you and encompasses all that is of concern to you wherever you are. He knows the treachery of your eyes and all that your heart conceals. Strive not to let Allah (swt) see you, except that He is pleased with you. Do not be unmindful in your observance of the One (glorified and exalted is He), otherwise Satan will infiltrate you and you will be overcome by the whispers of your whims and desires. Believe, my dearest brother, that whenever a heart is conscious of Allah's observance, it will never be approached by Satan. However, once it departs from Allah's awareness, evil will be attracted to it and it will be inhabited by whims and desires. So, consolidate your heart with the observance of Allah and in vigil seek refuge from your surroundings and do not be among the unmindful.

2. Perform the obligatory duties which Allah has enjoined upon you, at their appointed times. Do not neglect them by relying on performing them at a later time, because you are busy with work or resorting to other excuses for justification. This is a deception of your own self and of your own whims:

And follow not desire that it beguile you from the way of Allah (Quran 38:26)

Understand also my dearest brother that no one draws nearer to Allah with anything more beloved to Him than performing the obligatory duties as stated in the hadith of al-Bukhari³. So be aware not to neglect your obligatory duties or feel lazy in performing them; they are Allah's right over you.

Be steadfast in prayer and perfect your fast. If you are in a state of complete inability to fast, then according to the saying of Allah (swt) you have a remission:

... For those who are capable of fasting with difficulty (but still do not fast) there is a redemption: feeding a needy man for each day missed. Whoever, voluntarily, does more good than

is required, will find it is better for him; and that you should fast is better for you, if you only knew. (Quran 2:184)

But be aware not to take this verse as an excuse for falling short. Fasting with hardship in the homeland of the West will earn you a valuable reward and be an asset to your account; it is pleasing to your Lord and righteous to yourself. So do not attempt to break the fast, unless you are unable to complete it.

I need not advise you, any further, towards your obligatory duties, after all they are your capital. Can you imagine one who has wasted his capital, what will his state be amongst tomorrow's profit makers?

3. Spend whatever time you can in performing supererogatory works as duties of obedience. Perform the Sunna prayers. Increase your appeal for forgiveness and the praising of your Glorified Lord. Remember, that one's supplication, during travel or in expatriation⁴, will be answered; hence, increase your supplication in secret and in humility.

Continue your remembrance of Allah (swt). The Prophet (saw)⁵ advised 'Ali (ra) to continuously dampen his tongue in the remembrance of Allah⁶. Do not abandon that path which leads you to nothing but duties and obedience, they are like an investment that multiply rewards. The remembrance of Allah amongst the unmindful nations is like a shining light. So make use of this time, for it is a season to harvest the rewards of the Hereafter, only for those who wish to seize the opportunities and benefit from such seasons.

4. Increase your recitation of the Glorious Quran with understanding and deliberation. It is a healing for the soul and a comfort to the heart. Designate from it a portion to read at the beginning of the day and a portion to read at the end of it, hence the best beginning and the best end.

5. In the delights of life and pleasures of the world, you will see that which inclines the heart, impresses the mind, attracts the eye and bewilders those whose spirits are weak. Do not let these seduce you away from virtue and cause you to forget the Hereafter:

Do not turn your eyes covetously towards the embellishments of worldly life that We have bestowed upon various kinds of people to test them. But the clean provision bestowed upon you by your Lord is better and more enduring.

Enjoin Prayer on your household, and do keep observing it We do not ask you for any worldly provision; rather: it is We Who provide you. The ultimate end is for piety. (Quran 20:131-2)

Be aware my dearest brother that in the sight of Allah (swt) all these pleasures weigh not even the wing of a gnat and lead neither to honor nor virtue. They are nothing but the manifestations of whims and pitfalls of seduction. So be careful not to let Satan deceive you, otherwise you will plunge into the abyss of sin and corruption. Always remember the words of Allah (swt):

Men are naturally tempted by the lure of women, children, treasures of gold and silver, horses of mark, cattle, and plantations. These are the enjoyments in the life of this world; but with Allah lies a goodly abode to return to. (Quran 3:14)

The Book of Allah recites these facts day and night. So do not be amongst those who favor the worldly life over the Hereafter, or amongst those deceived by the outward appearance of things without considering their essence. All pleasures brought by contemporary civilization will result in nothing other than pain - A pain that will overwhelm their enticement and remove their sweetness.

So avoid the worldly aspects of these people; do not let it take over your command and deceive you, if you are to be among the successors.

6. Dearest brother, what Allah has made Haram (unlawful) for us, those people consider it as Halal (lawful) for them. Hence, when they commit a Haram (unlawful) act, they will neither feel ashamed nor will they refrain from perpetrating it. You should neither agree with their whims nor mix with them in their sins. Otherwise, you will not be relieved from having to answer before Allah (swt) and it will not hold as an excuse on the Day of Judgement.

7. Do not take their women for company, and do not let there develop between you and them, any special friendship or any

emotional relationship. If this kind of socializing is a sin for those other than you, then it is a sin twice as great for you and you know well the meaning of this.

Although you are known to us to be one that is trustworthy and decent, I have mentioned this to you, to caution you against the downfalls of sins so that your feet may never slip. And in your chastity let there be content and in your dignity let there be adequacy.

8. As for alcohol, do not approach it. And do not use the climate as an excuse, because when Allah made it Haram (unlawful), He had full knowledge about all types of climate but did not exclude one country from another or one nation from another from this prohibition. Allah (swt) made it forbidden with neither doubt nor exception. So be aware not to let it occupy a part of your abdomen, otherwise it will remain as a black spot on its pure skin.

Be determined as much as possible before the first drink. Because once your mind is concealed by it, you will follow it by the second and third drink, whereby you will have fallen into a pit, difficult to escape from and will have incriminated yourself and others. Then, even if you expiated this sin with repentance, you would still not match your original purity and superb credibility.

9. Do not taste anything in those restaurants which serve Haram (unlawful) food, like pork and dead meat. In that which is Halal (lawful) you have a substitute and enough for contentment. So do not taste the Haram (unlawful) and do not let your flesh grow on it, otherwise fire is what it deserves. Allah (swt) has prohibited that which is impure:

... He enjoins upon them what is good and forbids them what is evil ... (Quran 7:157)

So leave that which is bad for that which is good.

10. As for casinos, night-clubs, and other such places of vanity, your time is far too precious to be wasted in them.

I have looked into the saying, 'time is made of gold', and I do not approve of it. Time is far more precious than gold, for time is life. Is it not true that your life is nothing but a few hours and you never know when they will end? Dearest brother, be stringent with your time and do not spend it except in that which is significant, and acquire pleasure in that which is lawful.

In the heavens there is calmness and on the earth there is beauty. In the gardens there is freshness and in you there is a sign. In the sea there is might and in the air there is nourishment. Take from all this comfort for your soul and recovery for your mind. And do not waste your time by being unmindful, this will shield you from good and lead you to evil.

11. Be critical, with insight, and be just and well acquainted with people. Do not let your goodness draw you to forget their bad, and their bad hurt you to forget their goodness. Rather, study them as would a researcher and an examiner⁷.

Encompass with knowledge all of their affairs, and then with an eye of insight, scrutinize it all. Present back the good that you find to your people and nation, and return with it victorious and supported. Other than that, throw it back on them and do not come back until you have dusted off your hands and emptied your mind of it all.

You will find there a group of people dishonoring your Prophet (saw), faulting your Quran and disgracing your people. Do not sit with such people, until they turn to a different theme, even if it is necessary for you to enter into a dialogue with them⁸.

Argue with them in the best manner. Explain to them the good that you know and avoid controversies that lead to hatred and sedition (fitna).

Lo! You (O Muhammad) guide not whom you love, but Allah guides whom He will. And He is best aware of those who walk aright. (Quran 28:56)

Dearest brother, be aware that calling the people through practical example is far better than calling them through speech⁹. It is far more fruitful and beneficial to use your commendable character, the perfection of yourself and your straight manner to

defend and call them to your religion and nation.

Whenever an opportunity arises for you to deliver a speech or a lecture at one of their meeting places or societies, prepare yourself for it. Choose that which will not stir disorder and that which will not offend integrity¹⁰.

Do not be apprehended by their stance, because Allah's aid is with those who are sincere. Be positive and do not insult other people's beliefs instead, elucidate to them their innate goodness and reveal to them our beliefs. By doing so, you will have adequately promoted awareness and incentive.

Finally, and there is still so much for me to say and I would have loved to continue this advice with you, yet my concern is that if I prolong this discourse any more, you may forget most of what I have said; for over speaking does distract one from what is being said.

For both of you then, may Allah raise you to be the best of the successors and may His safety accompany you. May He protect both of you and return you in goodness, as is wished by those who are sincere. I entrust to Allah your religion, your obligations and the outcome of your actions. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon you.

Amin.

Hasan Al-Banna

Footnotes:

1. Islamic Law (Jurisprudence).

2. Glorified and exalted is He.

3. On the authority of Abu Huraira (ra), who reports that the Messenger of Allah (saw) said: Allah (swt) said: 'Whosoever shows enmity to someone devoted to Me, I shall be at war with him. My servant draws not near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him, and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it. I do not hesitate about [seizing] the soul of My faithful servant: he hates death and I hate hurting him.' (Bukhari)

4. On the authority of Abu Huraira (ra), who reports that the Messenger of Allah (saw) said: 'Three kinds of prayers are to be granted without an iota of doubt: the prayer of an oppressed person, the prayer of a traveler and the prayer of a father for his son.' (Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi)

5. May the blessings of Allah be upon Muhammad (saw).

6. On the authority of 'Abdullah ibn Busr (ra) it is reported that a man requested the Prophet (saw): 'O messenger of Allah. The Islamic edicts appear to me a bit too much, so kindly tell me something (lighter and easier) which I should hold fast to.' He (saw) answered: 'Let your tongue remain busy constantly with the remembrance of Allah.' (Tirmidhi)

7. On the authority of Abu Huraira (ra) who reports that the Prophet of Allah (saw) said: 'People are like mines of gold and silver. Those of them who are best before Islam are best in Islam, if they understand; and the spirits are like gathering armies, among those who are similar in qualities, they get mixed up with each other and those who are not, they drift away from each other.' (Bukhari and Muslim)

8. Allah has enjoined upon you in the Book that when you hear the signs of Allah being rejected and scoffed at, you will not sit with them until they engage in some other talk, or else you will become like them. Know well, Allah will gather the hypocrites and the unbelievers in Hell all together. (Quran 4:140)

9. O you who believe! Why say you that which you do not? It is most hateful in the sight of Allah that you say that which you do not. (Quran 61:2-3)

10. 'All ibn Abi Talib (ra) said: 'Speak to the people about that which they can comprehend, otherwise you run the risk of making people disbelieve in God and His Messenger.' (Bukhari) According to 'Abdullah ibn Masud (ra) the Messenger of Allah (saw) said: 'Whenever you speak to the people of something their mind cannot comprehend, it could lead some of them towards Fitna (disbelief or doubt).' (Muslim)



MUSLIM WOMEN FIND LIBERATION IN MODEST ATTIRE

By Jennifer Halperin, The Dispatch Staff



Growing up in California, Norma Tarazi spent the early years of her life mired in a culture of miniskirts and hot pants, where many considered beauty and bare skin as worthy goals. So her conversion to Islam as an adult - after which she adopted the style of dress known as hijab that covers much of the body and hair - amounted to no small change in life-style.

The Koran calls for both Muslim women and men to dress modestly in public. Although Islam doesn't specify a style or form of dress, Suzanne Haneef writes in her book **What Everyone Should Know About Islam and Muslims** that a woman is required to "be completely covered except for her hands and face and that her dress should conceal her form, be loose and nontransparent, and not of a kind to attract attention by its beauty."

Many non-Muslim women might think of such dress as restrictive or even oppressive - a sign of submission to men - but those who have adopted hijab find it nothing less than liberating.

"People gauge who you are by what you wear and what you look like; you can't get away from that," says Tarazi, who lives in Worthington and edits the IQRA! newsletter of the Islamic Society of Greater Columbus. "I used to feel uncomfortable (trying to keep up with) styles and looks. I was an intellectual type with glasses; I didn't go to the prom. Hijab frees you from trends and trying to keep up with appearances."

Dr. Asma Mobin-Uddin, a local pediatrician who is vice president of the Ohio Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, finds irony in the perception that hijab somehow represents a woman's submission to her husband.

"It's the total opposite of subordination," she says. "We wear it because we choose to; we refuse to let ourselves be sex objects. We're saying: 'Value us for what we are, our character, not how we look. We're not going to play the game of trying to look good for you. We won't let you hire us because you like our legs, or we'll look good around the office.'"

"In the West, I don't think women really see or realize how much you're tied to fashion, how much time you spend - or waste, I should say - dressing 'appropriately' and following fashion," Mobin-Uddin said.

Hijab is an Arabic word meaning "curtain." Some use it to refer to the headdress many Islamic women wear; others use it to describe modest dress in general - loose, unrestrictive clothing that covers the body, including Western-style blazers and long skirts.

As religious and cultural groups unfamiliar with one another's practices begin to work and live together, misperceptions can arise, said Alam Payind, director of the Middle East Studies Center at Ohio State University.

Sometimes these misperceptions have led to clashes. The city of Portsmouth, Va., for example, recently agreed to pay \$100,000

each to two Muslim women who were arrested in 1996 for wearing veils in public. They were charged with violating a state law prohibiting the wearing of masks. The law, aimed at exposing Ku Klux Klan members, exempted people who cover their faces for religious reasons.

In France, where Islam is the second-largest faith after Roman Catholicism, Muslim students often are expelled from schools for wearing Islamic attire. Last year, France's highest administrative court reaffirmed a ban on wearing hijab in public schools.

"That's an ethnocentric mentality," Payind said. "You have women in the Middle East thinking they are more free than women here. Who is more free, they ask: Women who buy lipstick, are slaves to fashion, need new clothing every season and try to make themselves appealing to men? Somehow we all have the view that when others do things differently they are oppressed."

Payind theorizes that misperceptions about hijab might be rooted in media reports about oppression of women in some Islamic nations, such as Afghanistan, ruled by the restrictive Taliban regime. But he notes that of the world's 56 Muslim countries, most don't require women to dress in any certain way; indeed, headscarves and other hijab coverings are discouraged in some, such as Turkey.

The religious mandate of modest dress is hardly limited to Islam, he says; observant Jewish women, for example, are urged to cover their hair and bodies to hide their beauty in public. Nuns' habits are rooted in a religious call for modesty, as well.

"What seems to be overlooked or misunderstood in the West," says Margaret Mills, chairwoman of OSU's Near Eastern Languages and Cultures Department, "is that hijab in a society often can be looked at as a way to 'decommercialize' women by looks, sexuality, and fashion."

CONVERTS IN KUWAIT : FROM SKIRTS TO ABAYAS

By Sarah McBride , Kuwait Times

KUWAIT: Like all devout Muslim women here, the figure in the veil and black cloak gave off an air of mystery and otherworldliness. As she disappeared inside a building, it was easy to imagine her background: Raised in her faith, shrouded in an abaya since the first sign of puberty. Actually, the woman rushing so purposefully inside the high walls of the Women's Committee of the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS) was an American raised as a Protestant, who converted to Islam in her twenties. She and other converted Muslim women meet weekly at various organizations around town to discuss issues of their new faith. They have a lot of company - thousands of Muslims living in Kuwait are former Christians, and many of them embrace practices that seem antithetical to the morals of those brought up in Europe or the United States. The most obvious custom is wearing the veil.

"Modesty, mostly" is the reason Hazel, a British woman who converted to Islam in 1981, gave for wearing it. "When you're covered, you're treating each other as human beings without being distracted." Another convert. Iman, points out covering is ordered in the Quran, and it is not nearly as restrictive as some people believe. "The translation for hijab (the term used for covering the hair, arms, and legs) is 'shield', and it is shielding the woman from harm and corruption. It doesn't restrict the freedom of the woman to move about, to carry out all her normal duties," she said.

It is stipulated in the Quran, rather ambiguously, that women should cover from "head to toe." But the Hadith or Sunna, a collection of sayings of the Holy Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him, and a description of his life, says women should be covered except for their hands and faces. Nowhere does it say women should wear black - this is a custom of the region rather than an Islamic requirement.

For Linda, a Canadian woman who converted to Islam in her 30s, wearing hijab was something she had to ease into. "Living in the Middle East has helped a lot," said Linda who met and married an Egyptian man after she converted. She thinks she still might be



dressing in the Western tradition if she and her husband had not spent a year in Saudi Arabia shortly after they married, by the end of which time she was wearing hijab. Linda recalls gradually becoming more and more uncomfortable with some of her clothes.

A turning point came when she dressed in a shirtwaist dress one evening to meet friends. As she and her husband waited for them in the lobby of her apartment building, she realized how ill at ease she felt in her outfit. After checking with her husband, she ran back upstairs and changed into something looser and longer. After that incident, she bought her first abaya.

Covering her hair was also something she took step by step. "A friend gave me two light scarves, chiffon, blue and beige," she said. She wore them from time to time, sometimes over her head, until she got used to the idea. Then she started wearing the traditional opaque scarf, tied at the throat and covering the neck.

The decision to wear hijab was taken with her husband, after much consultation. Today, Linda would like to cover more by wearing a coat, which buttons up the front and never flies open to reveal the clothing underneath, as abayas sometimes do. But her husband does not want her to, so for the time being, she continues to wear the abaya. "He wants me to look nice," she explained. "He thinks that just because a person is wearing hijab doesn't mean they can't look nice."

True to his word, Linda always does look well put together under her abaya, and takes obvious care with her appearance. Soon, Linda's adolescent daughter will have to start wearing hijab, a transition both are somewhat apprehensive about. "She's nervous about it, because not too many kids (in her English school) do," Linda explained. "It's going to be a little bit difficult. I wish that it would have come naturally, earlier."

Another regular visitor to the RIHS is Badriya, an Egyptian chemist in her thirties who lived in Canada for many years. Although she was raised in Islam, she started wearing hijab in 1990, two years after moving back to Egypt. "I saw my younger sisters in hijab, and I started to ask myself why I didn't wear hijab," she said. She tried on a sister's scarves, and decided to start covering. But there was no going step-by-step for her, graduating from flimsy wraps to the large cloth that covers hair and neck.

"One day, I said, okay, I'm going to wear hijab. The second day, I went to my work, covered." But as with Linda, her decision was taken jointly with her engineer husband, whom she married in 1982. "My husband - I won't say forced, but he encouraged me," she explained. "He said, you're working with men, you should cover." Now, Badriya regrets not covering sooner, and is contemplating covering more. "I hope, if it's right Allah will let me cover my face," she said.

Iman is a Muslim convert who does cover her face. Originally from Oregon in the United States, she has gone well beyond hijab to wear a mask called bashiya, which hides the entire face except the eyes. These peep through slits show not at all, because she often covers the bashiya with a semi-transparent black veil known as niqab. She also wears gloves, so she does not have to show an inch of skin when she is out on the street.

Despite her propriety, she says she does not advocate that everyone cover the face. "There's no compulsion - it's up to the individual," she explained. "It's my choice and I stand behind it."

Nevertheless, she is thinking about easing up a little. "I'm thinking of going to navy blue," she announced breezily. "It's not Islamically required to wear black." She is also contemplating finding an alternative for her abaya, which has been seeming cumbersome of late. "I move a lot - I'm always stopping and having to adjust it," she said.

Like Linda, she eased into Islamic modesty. Although she con-

verted in her mid-twenties, she did not become devout at first. She gradually started wearing hijab in Seattle, where she met women in an Arabic class who were practicing Islam fully. To the office, she wore long-sleeved blouses and long skirts, which were fine with the dress code of the fabric company where she worked.

Sometimes, she put on a hat and gloves. "I dressed very elegant, as they put it," she said. One day, a friend from Saudi Arabia called her and asked her to read; a certain verse from the Quran. "It was the verse dealing with hijab," Iman said. "It was like somebody had taken a flashlight or a spotlight and shined it on this verse of the Quran." After that she started to take hijab much more seriously, but still

her understanding of it was flawed. For example, her clothes would be modest in style, but too flashy in color. Bright red was a favorite, which defeats the purpose of deflecting attention. She also did not really grasp the concept of an abaya, but tried to wear one while praying. "I wrapped this gigantic bedsheet around me because I'd seen it on TV," she said, laughing.

Listening to her, it is at first hard to see how anyone with such a seeming vague idea of her religion could embrace it so wholeheartedly. But for many converts, the peace they found with Islam came long before a deep understanding.

Talking to enough of them reveals a pattern: Until they became Muslim, they were often depressed and adrift, feeling a large spiritual void. Many of them experimented with several religions before turning to Islam. In many ways, Linda is a good illustration. "I was not very happy," Linda said. "I felt lost, I was drifting. I didn't feel like I belonged in my society."

Her first move was to go back to her church, the United Church of Canada. "But the United Church . . . it's a very boring church," she said. "There was no vitality, there was no life." At the same time, she was learning about Islam, where she found a belief system and rules she liked. "The answers were there, it brought (faith) to life," she said. In Christianity, "it's very difficult to find them." Eventually, she converted.

For her family, this seemed strange, but they don't understand Islam, Linda said. One recurring problem is her mother's failure to grasp that the incentive for wearing hijab is spiritual, and does not depend on location. When Linda returns to Canada for visits, her mother invariably tries to get her to take off her scarves, saying she doesn't need to wear them in the West.

Hazel faced the same difficulty back in England, with her mother assuming she wore the veil only to make her Kuwaiti husband happy. "Go on, take it off, I won't tell him," her mother would urge her.

As an Englishwoman embracing a very un-English practice, she thinks she makes some people uncomfortable, she says. Others are more snide than embarrassed. "Isn't the, a bit hot?" Is a favorite question about her clothing. Laughing, she said her favorite reply was, "Not as hot as hellfire . . . it's a bit cheeky, I know, but they deserve it."

Iman faced far more serious problems. She went through a divorce in her mid-twenties, and lost her two young sons to her ex-husband. A large part of his custody case hinged on her conversion to Islam, she said. Other members of her family shun her.

At her mother's funeral in 1980, her devout Assembly of God uncle told her the family considered her as good as dead for converting from Christianity. "When we bury her, we bury you," she said he told her. Shortly after that, she moved to the United Arab Emirates to study at the Sheikh Sayeed Center for New Muslims, and has not left the Gulf area since.

Staying here, where she directs a women's group at the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society, enables her to practice her religion more fully, she said. Perhaps most impressive is her obvious commitment and conviction. "I chose the right religion," she said. "I've stayed with it." Badriya and Linda are assumed names to protect the privacy of the people interviewed.

How I Embraced Islam

Why Islam?

By Sr. Amirah

Many people, Muslim and Christian alike have asked me, "why Islam"?

What was it that made a young Southern woman leave the only religion she knew and had been taught for over 20 years and choose Islam? The answer, for me is very simple. The "Bible" itself convinced me of the purity and truthfulness of Islam.

Since my reversion to Islam over four years ago, I have tried adamantly to focus more on the similarities between Islam and Christianity rather than the differences. We are told in the Holy Qur'an:

'Say, "O people of the book (a term which particularly refers to Jews and Christians) come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him (in His powers and divine attributes); that we erect not from among ourselves Lords and patrons other than Allah.' If then they turn back say you "Bear witness that we are Muslims, (bowing to the will of God)." (Translation of Surah Al-Imran 3:64)

In doing da'wah, (which all Muslims are commanded to do) ("convey my message, even one ayah.") it is imperative that respect be shown one to another. However, this is not to mean that we have to agree with each other. Islam does not teach that heated debates and hate filled arguments are the means to be used in the education of non-Muslims. Rather, we are told in the Holy Qur'an:

"Invite (all) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful exhortation and argue with them in ways that are best." (Translation of Surah An-Nahl 16:125)

Therefore it is not my intention in this writing to further the gap between Muslims and Christians, but to only briefly explain on a personal scale why I chose Islam based on my studies of what the Christians believe to be the divine word of God, the "Bible". To give you a short insight to my upbringing, I can assure you that I have never once regretted being raised as a Christian (Southern Baptist). Perhaps some will not understand this, but true Christianity teaches a way of living by honor, solid morals and values as well as a deep commitment to family and God.

As a young child I sat almost every night listening to my father read to my mother and I from the Bible. Sundays and Wednesdays were spent at church practically from dawn to dusk since my father was the preacher. Many nights were spent holding Bible studies in our home. As I grew older and continued to study my religion and read the Bible with a better understanding, many questions, and doubts began to arise in my mind.

However, I was taught that a true believer never questions the word of God (Bible) so these doubts and questions were kept hidden deep inside. I can not begin to recount all of the doubts and questions I had, so I will try and recall those that are foremost in my memory.

The Original Sin

The Bible teaches first in Genesis 2:15-16 and Genesis 3:16-19, that all mankind would suffer due to the disobedience (sins) of Adam and Eve. I did not understand this as a child and it was even harder for me to comprehend as a young adult. Imagine, if you will, my confusion when I read in Deuteronomy 24:16 where Moses (pbuh) says: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man will be judged and put to death according to his own sin."

Also, in Ezekiel 18:19-20 the Bible says: "Yet you say, Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity (sin) of the father? When the son

has done what is lawful and right, and has been careful to observe all my statutes, he shall not suffer for the iniquity (sin) of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself."

Just from those two verses alone it is obvious that there are contradictions to the doctrine of the "original sin", so allow me to explain.

Christians believe that the Old Testament (where both of the above verses were taken from) and its laws were destroyed when Jesus (pbuh) arrived. However, in the New Testament (where today's Christians places its emphasis) in Matthew 5:17 Jesus (pbuh) says: "think not that I come to destroy the laws or the prophets before me: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." Studying further, in John 9:1-3 Jesus (pbuh) himself said: "As Jesus passed by, he (Jesus) saw a man blind from his birth, (2) and his (Jesus) disciples asked, "Master, who did sin? This man, or his parents, that he was born blind? (3) Jesus answered, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God be manifest in him".

As you can see for yourself in the above verses there are many contradictions to man's doctrine of "The Original Sin" both in the Old and New Testament. Thereby, the seed of doubt and confusion was planted in my mind.

Doctrine of Atonement & The Trinity

Christians also believe and teach what is known as the "Doctrine of Atonement". In layman's terms it simply means that God was sent to earth in human form (Jesus), He died on the cross and was resurrected thereby; cleansing us of our sins and "saving" us from eternal death in hell. The Doctrine of Atonement was accepted by the Church almost four centuries after Jesus left the earth.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth (have faith) in him shall not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16

"Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace and faith ye are saved". Ephesians 2:5

"For by grace are ye saved through faith in Jesus Christ and not works". Ephesians 2:8

So if a person would just say the words "I ask Jesus Christ into my heart as my personal Lord and savior", you were "saved". This alone was a disturbing thought. It was as though I could commit murder or any other heinous crime and provided I had faith I would go to heaven? Was I the only one that had seen something wrong with these teachings? When you logically look at this doctrine no one can deduce that Allah (swt) Almighty, All Merciful, All Knowing, was in need of assistance to "save" His own creations. If you read Romans 6:23 it says:

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Jesus did not tell the people that! This verse came about from a letter written by Paul to the people of the Church of Corinth.

Then later I read: "Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead being by itself." James 2:17

So which was it, faith or works that was our promised path to heaven? Was I dead, or was I alive? Was I still paying for Adam and Eve's sins? The confusion mounted.

Jesus And God Are One?

From the time Jesus was a small boy he told the people what his mission was.

"I am indeed a servant of God. He has given me scripture and has made me a Prophet. He has blessed me wherever I may be and has made prayer and charity my duty as long as I live." (Translation of Surah Maryam 19:30-31)

In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark & Luke there are approximately 22 references to Jesus (pbuh) as the son of God, but not in any of these verses will read where Jesus (pbuh) himself said he was the son of God. In fact when Jesus was brought before a high priest, you read in Matthew 26:62: "And ask if he was the Son of God, Jesus remained silent.

Again the high priest said, "Have you no answer to make?" What is it that these men testify against you? But Jesus was still silent. The high priest then said to Jesus, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said, "YOU have said so."

Even Jesus himself said: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Matthew 15:9

Also, in Mark 12:29 it says: "And Jesus answered him saying", "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O' Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord."

In John 5:30 Jesus in his own admittance says: "I can of my own self do nothing."

All doctrines of modern Christianity were made by men: The Trinity, Divine Sonship of Jesus, The Original Sin and the Atonement. Doctrines of men can lead nowhere but to confusion. Even the Bible backs this up in I Corinthians 14:33: "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

In numerous verses throughout the New Testament, Jesus never claims to be God nor did he claim divinity.

John 8:28 - "I do nothing of myself."

John 14:28 - "My father is greater than I."

Mark 12:29 - "The Lord our God is one Lord."

Mark 15:34 - "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Luke 23:46 - "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

In addition to all the other contradictions, in Luke 4:1-13 the Bible tells us that Satan tempted Jesus for forty days. However, in James 1:13 it is said: "...for God cannot be tempted with evil..."

Are you seeing now how the seed of doubt that was planted in my mind as a child was only nurtured by the contradictions in what was taught to me to be the word of God? Again, Jesus never called himself God or referred to himself as he and God being one in the same. If you look at what Jesus (pbuh) actually claimed to be, a messenger (prophet) of God, you can plainly see that this goes hand in hand with the Islamic teachings and the Divine word of God found in the Holy Qur'an. In The Holy Qur'an the angels told Mary (Maryam):

"Mary, God gives you good tidings of a Word from Him who name is Messiah Jesus, son Mary; high honored shall he be in this world and the next, near stationed to God. He shall speak to men from the cradle, and of age, and righteous he shall be. "Lord, said Mary, "how shall I have a son seeing no man has touched me? "Even so", he said, "God creates what He will: "When he decrees a thing He does but say to it "Be", and it is. (Translation of Surah Al-Imran 3:45-47)

"Then the angels called him, while he was standing in prayer in Al-Mihrab (a praying place or a private room) (saying): Allah gives you glad tidings of Yahya (John the Baptist), confirming (believing in) the word from Allah (i.e. the creation of Isa (Jesus), the word from Allah ("Be"...and he was!), noble, keeping away from sexual relations with women, a prophet from among the righteous. (Translation of Surah Al-Imran 3:39)

"That is Jesus, son of Mary, in word of truth, concerning which they are doubting. It is not for God to take a son unto Him. Glory be to Him! When He decrees a thing, He but says to it "Be", and it is. (Translation of Surah Maryam 19:34-35)

Jesus (pbuh) said in the Qur'an: "And verily, Allah is my Lord and your Lord. So worship Him (Alone). That is the Straight

Path. (Allah's religion of Islamic Monotheism which He did ordain for all of His Prophets)." (Translation of Surah Maryam 19:36)

Islam knows that Jesus had no human father, however; this does not make him the son of God or God Himself. If the Christians were basing their beliefs and doctrine on the fact that Jesus had not an earthly father, then it would stand to reason that Adam had more entitlement to be labeled the son of God, as he had neither a human mother nor father. The Qur'an states the miraculous creation of both Adam and Jesus in the following verse:

"Truly the likeness of Jesus, in God's sight, is as Adam's likeness; He created him of dust, then said He unto him, "Be", and he was. (Translation of Surah Al-Imran 3:59)

"O, Mankind: worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, so that you may ward off evil; who has appointed the earth as a resting place for you, the sky a canopy, and who causes water to pour down from the heavens, thereby producing fruit as food for you. So do not set up rivals to God, when you know better." (Translation of Surah Al-Baqarah 2:21-22)

As an adult teaching Sunday school, many times the children would ask me questions and I can remember the guilt I felt when all I could give them for an answer was "we just have to have faith". One afternoon, I went to the public library in my town looking for a concordance to help explain that which I didn't understand in the Bible.

I was taken to a long row of books where over 1700 versions of the Bible were located. I remember feeling so lost and not knowing where to begin. Finally I reached for one and sat down in the middle of the aisle and began to read. It seemed all the translations were different in one way or another.

(Note: Some versions of the Bible had completely omitted the miraculous conception of the virgin Mary (Maryam) or had worded so that the entire meaning was lost. Since the Christians believe Jesus and God are one in the same I found it very odd that this miraculous birth of Jesus was left out) I remember praying to God to guide me to help me find the truth.

I was searching, but I didn't know for what. As I was about to leave the library the title of a book attracted my attention. Upon closer investigation I saw that there were was an entire wall covered with "Missing chapters of the Bible"! I broke down into tears. Had God answered my prayers so quickly? I believe, yes.

I can honestly say that I do not remember a time that I ever doubted there was a God, perhaps on more than one occasion I questioned who He was, simply because of all the contradictions I had read in the Bible. But Allah (swt) is all Knowing all Wise, and through these contradictions and confusion it opened my heart and mind so that when the truth was presented to me, I knew without a shadow of a doubt that it was the True Religion of God.

When Islam was first presented to me, I knew it was pure. One of the first things I asked was "how many "versions" is there of the Qur'an?". I was told only one text had ever been in existence and that the original text had never changed.

I found myself going to every bookstore and library I could find, looking for some contradictions in the Qur'an. Although there are several interpretations of the Qur'an, never will you find contradictions even in the interpretations. I also compared the Arabic text from one Qur'an to another. I didn't need to be able to read Arabic to visibly see that the text was the same.

Finally, satisfied that I wasn't going to be deceived again, I began to read the translations. I was amazed with the similarities of what was found in the Qur'an and what was contained in the Bible, without the contradictions though.

Once I started reading I couldn't stop. The emphasis placed on the oneness (tawheed) of God found in the Qur'an was like reading the truth for the first time. There were no doubts; there was no confusion. I had found what I was searching for.

The Holy Qur'an (The Final Revealed Text From God)

Mankind was sent the Divine guidance through two forms. First, the word of Allah (swt) and second the Prophets who were chosen by Allah (swt) to go out and orate His will to the humane race.

In the original text of the Bible, tawheed (monotheism) was taught. Tawheed is a revolutionary principle and constitutes the essence of the teachings of Islam. It means that there is only One Supreme Lord of the universe, He is all-Powerful, all-Knowing and the Sustainer of the world and of humanity.

However; for the most part this concept was lost from the Bible when the people of that time elevated Jesus to the level of being God himself. The Old Testament, the Gospels, and the New Testament were all sent before the Qur'an was revealed but even those were only transcripts simply because the followers of Prophet Moses (pbuh) and Prophet Jesus (pbuh) made little to no effort to record and preserve the teachings of their own Prophets.

When the Qur'an was revealed there were thousands upon thousands who not only recorded the Divine words of Allah (swt) (sent to Prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel) but who also memorized them. Abu Bakr, the first Caliph entrusted the collection of the whole Qur'an in one volume to the Prophet's scribe, Zaid Ibn Thabit.

This volume was with Abu Bakr till his death. Omar the second Caliph was given the text to protect and preserve next and after him it came to Hafsa, the Prophet's wife. It was from this original copy that the third Caliph Uthman prepared several other copies and sent them to different Muslim territories.

The Qur'an was perfectly preserved as it was to be the Book of guidance for humanity for all times to come. That is why it does not address the Arabs alone in whose language it was revealed. It speaks to man as a human being:

"This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion." (Translation of Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:3)

After the Qur'an was revealed, many people started unfounded rumors about its authenticity. Allah (swt) in all His infamous wisdom knew they would and sent down the following challenges to mankind found in the ayah's below.

"Or do they say: 'He (Muhammed) has forged it?'. Say: 'Bring then a Surah (chapter) like unto it, and call upon whomsoever you can besides Allah, if you are truthful!'" (Translation of Surah Yunus 10:38)

"Or they say; 'He (Prophet Muhammad) forged it (the Qur'an)'. Say: 'Bring you then ten forged Surah (chapters) like unto it, and call whomsoever you can, other than Allah (to your help), if you speak the truth!'" (Translation of Surah Hud 11:13)

"Say: 'If the mankind and the jinn were together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they helped one another.'" (Translation of Surah Al-Isra 17:88)

"And if you (Arab pagans, Jews and Christians) are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down (i.e. the Qur'an) to Our servant Muhammad, then produce a Surah (chapter) of the like thereof and call your witnesses (supporters and helpers) besides Allah, if you are truthful." (Translation of Surah Al-Baqarah 2:23)

Many years had been spent in confusion; many years of thirst had gone by, and finally, alhamdulillah my thirst was quenched. May Allah (swt) guide you as well in your search for the truth to the one and only true religion of God, Islam. Ameen.

Ashhadu Alla ilaha illallah

(I bear witness that there is no God but Allah)

Wa Ashhadu Anna Muhammad Rasulul Allah

(and I bear witness that Muhammad is His Messenger)

Written by an American Convert

By Sr. Amirah for The Islamic Bulletin

Resources used:

- King James Bible
- New American Standard Bible
- The Living Bible
- The New International Version
- The Qur'an

IMPORTANT REMINDER

The verses of the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet (S) have been printed for the benefit of our readers. You are asked to ensure their sanctity. Therefore, they should be disposed of in the proper Islamic manner.

ABBREVIATIONS USED

Subhana Wa Ta'ala (SWT) - May Allah (God) be glorified and exalted

Sallallahu alayhi wasallam (SAW); (or Alayhi Salam) AS; Peace Be Upon Him PBUH; R.A.; R.A.A. - Allah was pleased with him/her.

CONVEYING THE MESSAGE OF ISLAM

Once upon a time, there were four people named Everybody, Somebody, Nobody, and Anybody.

When there was an important job to be done, Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. When Nobody did it, Everybody got angry because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Somebody would do it, but Nobody realized that Nobody would do it. So it ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done in the first place!

The Prophet (SAW) said, "Convey my message, even one ayah (verse)."

THE MOSQUITO AND ITS EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURE

Islamic Science

By Harun Yahya

“Surely Allah is not ashamed to set forth a parable even of a mosquito or any thing above that;” (Quran 2:26)

As people are invited to contemplate their own creation, the Qur’an frequently calls people to investigate nature and to see the signs of Allah therein. The whole universe, with all its living and non-living elements, consists of the signs revealing that they have been ‘created’. And they exist just in order to demonstrate the power, knowledge, and art of their ‘Creator’. Mankind is responsible to know these signs and appreciate the Creator of all, Allah. All living things possess these signs, yet there are some specifically mentioned animals in the Qur’an. The mosquito is one of these. This is referred to in the Qur’an in the below verse:

“Surely Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable- (that of) a gnat or any thing above that; then as for those who believe, they know that it is the truth from their Lord, and as for those who disbelieve, they say: What is it that Allah means by this parable: He causes many to err by it and many He leads aright by it! but He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors,” [Al-Baqara (The Cow) 26]

When considering the life of the mosquito, we can say that it has a very extraordinary adventure. What is generally known about mosquitoes is that they absorb and feed on blood. Yet, this is not completely true. Because not all mosquitoes, but only the female ones absorb blood. And their need for blood is actually not related to feeding at all. Actually, both male and female mosquitoes feed on nectar of flowers. The only reason that females, unlike males, do absorb blood is for their eggs, which need to mature with the help of proteins contained in blood. In other words, the female mosquito absorbs blood just to ensure the survival of the new generation.

The point to be stressed here is that the verse of the Qur’an points out only the ‘female’ mosquito. It is only the female mosquito which has the superior capabilities that will be detailed here. So, it is surely quite expressive that female mosquitoes are particularly emphasized in the Qur’an. Besides, it is a remarkable fact to point out that at the time of the revelation of the Qur’an, the specific biology of the mosquito was knowledge unknown to mankind.

The development process and its phases, is one of the most amazing aspects of the mosquito. This animal converts from a larva into a mosquito after passing through completely distinct phases. Let us see this adventurous story of the mosquito briefly. The mosquito eggs, which are fed with blood, are laid by the female mosquito on damp leaves or dried ponds for maturation, during summer or fall. But prior to this, the mother initially examines the ground thoroughly by using a receptor placed under her abdomen, functioning as a humidity and temperature sensor. She aims at finding a convenient place for her eggs. When the most suitable area is found, she starts to lay her eggs. These eggs, which have a length of less than 1 mm, are arranged in a line, either in groups, or one by one. Some species lay their eggs joined to each other forming a raft, some of which may contain up to 300 eggs.

The carefully placed white eggs soon start to change their color. Only a few hours after they are laid down, they become completely black in color. With this change, they attain an excellent protection against birds and insects. Their dark color can not be recognized by these creatures.

It takes a winter for the incubation period to complete. Since eggs are created with such a structure to resist a long and cold winter, they survive until spring when their incubation period ends. When the incubation period is complete, the larvae start getting out of their eggs. The first egg is immediately followed by

the others. As soon as they get out of the eggs, they start to swim in water. Now, the underwater days start for the mosquitoes.

The continuously fed larvae grow with great speed. Soon the skin covering their body gets too small to let them grow any further. This is the time for their first skin change. The hard and brittle skin gets easily broken. Until this developmental cycle is completed as a whole, the mosquito larvae will change its skin two more times.

Since the life of the mosquito initializes in water, the system designed for the feeding of the larvae is rather impressive. The larvae empowers whirlpools in the water with its feathered prolongations located at the two sides of its mouth, which lead bacteria and other micro-organisms for feeding. And a solution also exists for its respiration: each larva has innate diving equipment. They breathe via respiratory tubes at their back while standing upside down in water. This system may be resembled to “snorkels” used by divers. During the employment of this method, the larva secrete a sticky secretion from their body in order to prevent water from leaking inside, through the respiratory openings. Shortly, the animal lives with the help of the combined harmony of all these delicate balances.

If it did not have a respiratory tube, it would not survive; if it did not have a sticky secretion, its respiratory tube would be choked. As the time goes by, most of the larvae change their skin once more. The last skin change is rather different from the others. With this last change, larvae pass onto the final phase of their maturation, the “pupa phase”, and they are ready to become a real mosquito at the end. So, the time has come for the mature pupa to get out of the sheath covering its body. However, the creature that gets out of the sheath is so different from its earlier phases, that it seems unbelievable for them to be just two developmental phases of the same being. And this metamorphosis is too complicated and delicate to be designed by the larva itself, nor by its mother, or any other thing.

During this last transition period, there is a threat for the creature, since the respiratory openings above the water may get closed with the leaking of water inside. This will naturally mean that the pupa will be out of breath, and die. But from then on, respiration will not be done via these holes. There emerge two new air tubes on the head of the pupa. Therefore, before the pupa gets ready for the last skin change, firstly these two tubes rise on the water. This will be its new method for respiration. During the three or four days of the pupa phase, there will be no nutrition for the coming mosquito.

Now, the mosquito within the pupa cocoon is mature enough and ready to fly with all its organs, like antennas, trunks, feet, chest, wings, abdomen and large eyes covering most of its head. Then, the pupa cocoon is torn at the top. This stage, where a complete mosquito will emerge, is the most dangerous stage of all. The greatest risk is water leakage into the cocoon. However, the torn top is covered with a sticky liquid preventing the head from contacting water. The mosquito must get out of water without having any direct contact with water, so only its feet touch the water surface. This instant is extremely important; even a light wind may cause its death. Finally, the mosquito leaves for its first flight after a rest of about half an hour.

It should be noted once again: The animal has gotten out of the water without even touching the water... At this point, the question that should come to mind is: how did the first mosquito attain such an ‘ability’? Might it be that each individual larva has decided to transform into a mosquito after changing skin three times? Absolutely, that is impossible. This tiny animal, which Allah gives as an example, has specifically been created as it is. This leads the Muslims to ponder on the creation of Allah, and think of how Allah has not created all this for nothing, to fear Allah and act totally to comply with His Will.

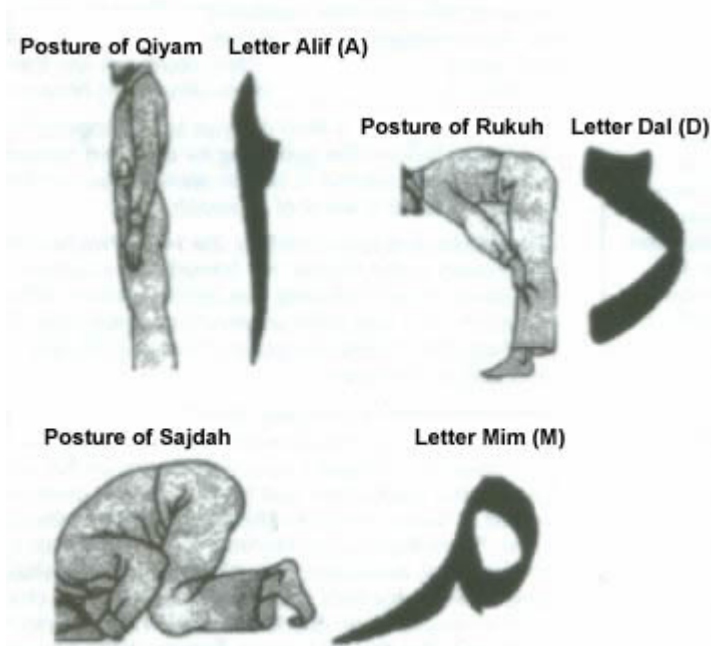
Men who celebrate the praises of Allah, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (With the thought): “Our Lord! Not for naught Hast Thou created (all) this! Glory to Thee! Give us salvation from the penalty of the Fire.

THE BENEFITS OF SUJOD

For thanking the Creator, for preventing a crisis, for healing sickness and diseases, for eliminating a problem, a Muslim prostrates, makes Sujood, to Allah (swt). A Muslim thanks Allah (swt) daily and regularly. A Muslim's methods of thanks and appreciations could be the minimum, saying verbally: "Subhana Rabbil ah'lah (Praise be to Allah)," (swt) or the maximum, i.e. of prostrating to Allah. During prostration, a person glorifies Allah, exalts Him, praises Him, and surrenders to Him.

Prostration is to Allah (swt) alone. No prostration is to be performed in front of any king, royal highness, president, or any other leader. Those individuals should also make sujood to Allah alone, and they should not allow anyone to bow to them or to prostrate to them. There are many medical benefits of prostration. As Muslims, one must pray five times a day. During the process of prayer, a Muslim must first stand erect; then bow forward; then prostrate on the floor where the whole body is bent; and then sit down on the floor to recite Tashahhud, Salat- Ibrahim, and other Du'as. All of these movements help the Muslims to have the least amount of arthritic problems on their bodies.

SALAT POSTURES CORRESPONDING TO THE WORD ADAM



Another interesting feature of the salat (prayer) is that the course of assuming three main positions (qiyam, rukuh, and sajdah) one makes the physical shapes of the Arabic Alif, Dal, and Mim. These spell the word Adam, the name of the first created human and the first prophet (a.s.).

People are exposed daily to many different problems. They may also be exposed to many electrostatic charges from the atmosphere. These charges affect the central nervous systems (CNS) supersaturating it. One has to rid themselves of these extra charges, otherwise, they will have headaches, neck aches, muscle spasms, etc.

The best way to get rid of these extra electrostatic charges is by dissipating them and discharging them from the body. In as much as an electrical appliance is in need of grounding (or "earthing") by the use of an electric cord, a human being has to "earth" him/herself to the ground as well. By putting, his/her forehead on the ground, because the thinking capacity of

the brain is in the forelobe and not the topmost portion of the brain, one dissipates the extra electrostatic charges from the brain and the central nervous system to the ground. Therefore, one will receive piece of mind and soul.

By doing prayer five times a day, with each prayer having several prostrations in it, a person will undoubtedly feel more peace, happiness, and relaxation. This type of approach does not cost money and does not have any side effects. It is very natural.

This is the best method for allowing a person to continue to live in peace, harmony, obedience, and happiness for the rest of his/her life.

Above all, a Muslim who performs prostration on the floor as a sign of obedience will attain tremendous rewards and blessings from our Creator, Allah Almighty.

THE ORIGIN OF ARABIC NUMERALS

one angle	two angles	three angles
1	2	3
four angles	five angles	six angles
4	5	6
seven angles	eight angles	nine angles
7	8	9
	no angle	
	0	
	(siffr, which gave the French word "chiffre")	

This chart shows the origin of Arabic numerals, which were defined according to the number of angles.

Stories Of The Sahabas



OMAR BIN KHATTAB (RA) - THE SECOND CALIPH OF ISLAM

Acceptance of Islam

Omar (RA) was twenty seven when the Holy Prophet (PBUH) began his mission. Young Omar (RA) did not care to listen to the message of Islam. As years went by, Islam made slow headway. This made Omar (RA) angry. When one of Omar's (RA) own maid-servants became a Muslim, he beat her severely. Still, she would not give up the new faith.

In the sixth year of the Mission, a number of Muslims left for Abyssinia. This made Omar (RA) boil with rage. "Here is a man," he thought to himself "who has split the people. People lived smoothly enough. He appeared on the scene and has torn son from father and brother from brother. Now his followers have run away to another land. Surely Muhammad is the cause of all trouble. I must slay him and put an end to the trouble."

With this resolve, Omar (RA) drew his sword and set out to kill the Holy Prophet (PBUH). On the way he met Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas who asked him why he looked so upset. Omar (RA) said to him, "I am after finishing Muhammad." "You had better first set your own house in order. Your sister and brother-in-law both have accepted Islam," said Sa'ad.

Hearing this, Omar flew into a towering rage and turned his steps towards his sister's house. The door of the house was bolted from inside and both husband and wife were receiving lessons in the Quran from Hadhrat Khabbab (RA). Omar knocked at the door and shouted for his sister to open it. Hadhrat Khabbab (RA) hearing the voice of Omar, hid himself in some inner room, forgetting to take the manuscript pages of the Holy Quran with him. When the sister opened the door, Omar hit her on the head, saying: "O, enemy of yourself. You too have renounced your religion."

Her head began to bleed. He then went inside and inquired. "What were you doing? Have you also forsaken the creed of your forefathers and gone over the new religion?" The brother-in-law replied, "But what if the new religion be the better and the true one?" Omar got beside himself with rage and fell on him, pulling his beard, and beating him most savagely. When the sister intervened, he smote her so violently on her face that it bled most profusely. She was, after all, Omar's sister; she burst out: "Omar, we are beaten only because we have become Muslims. Listen! We are determined to die as Muslims. You are free to do whatever you like."

When Omar had cooled down and felt a bit ashamed over his sister's bleeding, his eyes fell on the pages of the Quran left behind by Hadhrat Khabbab (RA). He said, "Alright show me, what are these?" No, said the sister, "You are unclean, and no unclean person can touch the Scripture." He insisted, but the sister was not prepared to allow him to touch the leaves unless he washed his body. Omar at last gave in. He washed his body and then began to read the leaves. It was Surat Taha".

"Verily, I am Allah: there is no god but I: so serve me (only), and establish regular prayer for My remembrance." (Quran 20:14)

The fear of Allah gripped his heart. He wept and declared, "Surely this is the word of Allah. I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

On hearing this, Hadhrat Khabbab (RA) came out from inside and said: "O, Omar! Glad tidings for you. Yesterday the Prophet (SAW) prayed to Allah, "O, Allah strengthen Islam with either Omar or Abu Jahl, whomsoever Thou Likest." It seems that his prayer has been answered in your favor."

Omar then went to the Prophet (SAW). He was not going to slay him but to embrace his faith. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) was sitting in the company of some men. He saw Omar (RA) coming and asked, "Omar (RA), what brings you here?" "O Prophet (PBUH) of Allah!" replied Omar (RA), "I have come to embrace Islam." Great was the joy of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and his followers. Loud shouts of "Allah is Great" rent the air of Mecca. Soon everyone knew that Omar (RA) was no longer an enemy of Islam. It was a great day for Islam because one of its bitterest enemies had become its staunch follower.

The coming over of Omar (RA) made a difference for Islam. Up until this time, the Muslims had lived in constant fear of the non-believers. Some of them had not even made their faith known to the people. They could not say their prayers publicly. All this changed when Omar (RA) became a Muslim.

The first thing Omar (RA) did was to call together the chiefs of Mecca. Before this gathering he declared himself a follower of Islam. They started at him in silence. No one had the courage to utter a word of reproach.

Omar (RA) next requested for the Holy Prophet (PBUH) to say prayers in the Kaaba. He himself led a party of Muslims to that place. A second party was led by Hamza. When all had gathered, they said their prayers in congregation. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) led the prayer. This was the first prayer of its kind said in the Kaaba.

When migration to Medina started, the same thing happened again. Most of the Muslims left Mecca silently and secretly. But Omar (RA) would not do so. He put on his arms. Then he went to the Kaaba and said his prayer. The chiefs of Mecca looked at him in silence. After the prayer, he shouted out to them, "I am leaving for Medina. If anyone wants to stop me, let him meet me across the valley. His mother shall certainly have to weep for him in sorrow." Despite this challenge, no Meccan would dare stop Omar (RA). These things earned Omar (RA) the title of Farooq. Farooq is the one who makes a difference. Omar (RA)'s acceptance of Islam had made a big difference for Islam and Muslims.

Devotion to the Prophet (PBUH)

Omar (RA) stood by the side of the Prophet (PBUH) in all battles and expeditions. Great was his love for Allah and His Apostle. He never allowed any blood ties or friendship to stand in the way of this love. The death of the Prophet (PBUH) was a stunning shock to Omar (RA). He could not believe it, so much so that he drew his sword and said that he would cut off the head of the man who said the Messenger of Allah was dead. He was overwhelmed with grief. Life without the Prophet (PBUH) was unthinkable, he thought. And if the Prophet (PBUH) was really no more, as people said, what was going to happen to Islam and the Muslims? These dark thoughts blotted out all reason from Omar's (RA) head. Not until Abu Bakr (RA) had reminded him of the clear verdict in the Quran did he come to himself by reciting the following verse from the Quran:

"Muhammad is no more than a Messenger: many were the Messengers that passed away before him. If he died or were slain, will you then turn back on his heels?" If any did turn back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allah." (Quran 3:144)

Abu Bakr (RA), during his caliphate, depended on Omar (RA) for advice. That was because the Holy Prophet (PBUH), in his lifetime, gave great weight to what Omar (RA) said.

Omar (RA) in Jerusalem

The Caliph left Ali (RA) in Medina as his deputy and himself left for Jerusalem to sign the treaty of peace. He had only one attendant with him and only one camel to ride. Omar (RA) and the attendant rode the camel by turns. It happened to be the servant's turn to ride on the day when they were to reach Jerusalem. "Commander of the Faithful," said the attendant, "I give up my turn. It will look awkward, in the eyes of the people, if I ride and you lead the camel."

"Oh no," replied Omar (RA), "I am not going to be unjust. The honor of Islam is enough for us all."

The treaty of peace said: From the servant of Allah and the Commander of the Faithful, Omar (RA): The inhabitants of Jerusalem are granted security of life and property. Their churches and crosses shall be secure. This treaty applies to all people of the city. Their places of worship shall remain intact. These shall

neither be taken over nor pulled down. People shall be quite free to follow their religion. They shall not be put to any trouble.

The gates of the city were now opened. Omar (RA) went straight to the Temple of David (Masjid-Al-Aqsa). Here he said his prayer under Prophet David's (AS) Arch.

Next he visited the biggest Christian church of the city. He was in the church when the time for the afternoon prayer came.

"You may say your prayers in the church," said the Bishop. "No," replied Omar (RA), "if I do so, the Muslims may one day make this an excuse for taking over the church from you."

So he said his prayers on the steps of the church. Even then, he gave the Bishop a writing. It said that the steps were never to be used for congregational prayers nor was the Adhan [call to prayer] to be said there.

Caliph Omar (RA)'s Address To His Fellow Muslims

"O ye people I counsel you to read the Quran. Try to understand it and ponder over it. Imbibe the teachings of the Quran. Then practice what the Quran teaches. The Quran is not theoretical; it is a practical code of life. The Quran does not bring you the message of the Hereafter only; it is primarily intended to guide you in this life.

Mold your life in accordance with the teachings of Islam for that is the way of your well being. By following any other way you will be inviting destruction.

"Fear Allah (The One True God), and whatever you want seek from Him. All men are equal. Do not flatter those in authority. Do not seek favors from others. By such acts you demean yourself. And remember that you will get only that is ordained for you, and no one can give you anything against the will of God. Then why seek things from others over which they have no control? Only supplicate God for He alone is the sovereign.

"And speak the truth. Do not hesitate to say what you consider to be the truth. Say what you feel. Let your conscience be your guide. Let your intentions be good, for verily God is aware of your intentions. In your deeds your intentions count. Fear God, and fear no one else. Why fear others when you know that whatever sustenance ordained for you by God you will get under all circumstances? And again why fear when you know that death is ordained by God alone and will come only when He wills?

"Allah has for the time being made me your ruler. But I am one of you. No special privileges belong to a ruler. I have some responsibilities to discharge, and in this I seek your cooperation. Government is a sacred trust, and it is my endeavor not to betray the trust in any way. For the fulfillment of the trust I have to be a watch-man. I have to be strict. I have to enforce discipline. I have to run the administration not on the basis of personal idiosyncrasies; I have to run it in public interest and for promoting the public good. For this we have the guidance in the Book of God. Whatever orders I issue in the course of day to day administration have to conform to the Quran.

"God has favored us with Islam. He sent to us His Messenger (Muhammad (PBUH), pbuh). He has chosen us for a mission. Let us fulfill that mission. That mission is the promotion of Islam. In Islam lies our safety; if we err we are doomed."

Omar (RA)'s Mosque

Omar (RA) wanted to build a mosque in Jerusalem. He asked the Bishop which place would be suitable for the purpose. The Bishop suggested the "Sakhra," or the rock on which Allah had talked to Prophet (PBUH) Jacob. Here the Christians had heaped garbage to tease the Jews.

Immediately the Sakhra was cleared of the garbage. Omar (RA) himself worked like a laborer with the rest of his men. Jerusalem, the city of Prophet David (AS) and of Prophet Christ (AS), witnessed the equality of Islam. When the Sakhra had been cleared of every trace of dirt, a mosque was built on the site. The mosque stands to this day and is known as Omar (RA)'s Mosque.

The Years of Omar (RA)'s Caliphate

Omar (RA) was Caliph for ten and a half years. This period stands

out as the golden age of Islam. Islam became a world power. It could now stand the wear and tear of time. The thing for which the Holy Prophet (PBUH) had prayed years before was now a fact. Omar (RA) had made Islam strong and great!

Omar (RA)'s amazing success was due to two things - his fear of Allah and his love for the Prophet (PBUH). In all his dealings he never forgot for a second that he was answerable to Allah. He strictly followed the example set by the Prophet (PBUH). These two things made him at once the most powerful ruler and the most selfless man of his time. He used all his power for the greater glory of Allah and His Prophet (PBUH).

Omar (RA) personally looked into the smallest affairs of the people. He worked like a laborer all day. At night, he went around the city to find out for himself how people lived and felt. He was ever ready to help those who needed his help. He would carry supplies on his shoulders and deliver them at the homes of the poor. Nothing could stop Omar (RA) from doing his duty to the people.

All citizens, including the Caliph himself, were equal before the law. Once Omar (RA) appeared before the court of Medina, somebody had made a complaint against him. The judge stood up to show respect to the Caliph as he entered the court. "This is the first injustice you have done to the plaintiff," said Omar (RA), addressing the judge. Modern democratic states have yet to reach this level of democracy. Their heads cannot be summoned before an ordinary court.

The greatest desire of Omar (RA) was to see the blessings of Islam flow in full measure to all people, in all countries under him. He himself could be approached by anybody. Even the humblest of men could stop him in the street. He could ask the Caliph why he had done a particular thing. A poor woman could speak back to him. She could point out to him any of his mistakes. With all his power and piety, he never considered himself above mistakes. He welcomed the opinions of those who differed with him. In fact he used to say, "Allah's mercy be on those who bring me the knowledge of my shortcomings."

Omar's Death

One morning Omar (RA) went to the mosque as usual to lead the prayer. Abu Lolo was already hiding in the corner, with a dagger in hand. As soon as Omar (RA) began the prayer, the assassin jumped on him. He gave six cuts with the dagger on the Caliph's body. The horrified worshippers overpowered the assassin. Thereupon the wretch slew himself with the same dagger.

Omar (RA) kept lying in a pool of blood until the prayer was over. Then he was carried home. "Who is my assassin?" he asked. "Abu Lolo," said the people. "Allah be thanked!" said Omar (RA). "It is not a Muslim who has shed my blood."

A physician was called in to dress and treat the wounds of the Caliph. He said they were too deep to be healed. At this many people who stood around began to weep.

"Please do not weep," implored Omar (RA). "Have you not heard the Messenger of Allah say that the weeping of relatives adds to the torture of the dead person?" Finding his end in sight, Omar (RA) called his son, Abdullah. "My son," he said, "go to Aisha. Give her Omar (RA)'s greetings. Do not refer to me as the Commander of the Faithful; for I am no longer one. Place before her my wish to be buried by the side of the Prophet (PBUH) and my illustrious predecessor."

Abdullah found Aisha weeping. He delivered his father's message to her. "I wanted to reserve this spot for my own grave, but I prefer Omar (RA) to myself," said Aisha. Abdullah conveyed Aisha's consent to his dying father.

"Allah be thanked!" said Omar (RA). "This was the greatest wish of my life. But look, son, when you take my dead body to be buried, again give her my greetings, and ask her permission. If she allows, bury me there, otherwise bury me in the graveyard of Medina."

As the end drew in sight, Omar (RA) began to weep, because of the fear of Allah. "My son," he called out to Abdullah, "help me put my forehead on the ground."

"O Allah," murmured the dying Caliph, "cover me with Your forgiveness. If that does not happen, woe to me and woe to the mother who bore me."

The next moment Omar (RA) was in Allah's Mercy and Forgiveness.

SAYINGS OF THE PROPHET



wisdom in Islam.

In each issue of the Islamic Bulletin, we have a section on the sayings (ahadith) of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

The hadith chosen in this issue are in no particular order, nor are they categorized by related topics.

Rather, these sayings of our Prophet (pbuh) were chosen because when read, they brought a smile to our faces or a calmness to our hearts and proved time after time the greatness and

Imagine using this wonderful guidance on a regular basis? It is important to endeavor to practice and then to invite others to practice these beautiful words of wisdom.

The Holy Prophet (pbuh) said: Allah revealed to my dear brother Uzair, "Oh Uzair! If a calamity befalls you, do not complain to my creation (to the people). How much wrong you have done to me and I never complained to my angels (about you). Oh Uzair! Disobey me as much as you can bear my punishment, and ask me your needs according to your good deeds towards me, and never feel secure of my decision (punishment) until you enter my paradise. Then Uzair started shaking and crying. So Allah revealed to him "if you disobey me out of ignorance, I forgive you out of my mercy, because I am generous and don't wish to punish my creation, as I am the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful." (Hadith Qudsi)

Allah has written down the good deeds and the bad ones. Then He explained it [by saying that] he who has intended a good deed and has not done it, Allah writes it down with Himself as a full good deed, but if he has intended it and has done it, Allah writes it down with Himself as from ten good deeds to seven hundred times, or many times over. But if he has intended a bad deed and has not done it, Allah writes it down with Himself as a full good deed, but if he has intended it and has done it, Allah writes it down as one bad deed. (Hadith Qudsi)

The first of his actions for which a servant of Allah will be held accountable on the Day of Resurrection will be his prayers. If they are in order, then he will have prospered and succeeded: and if they are wanting, then he will have failed and lost. If there is something defective in his obligatory prayers, the Lord (glorified and exalted be He) will say: See if My servant has any supererogatory prayers with which may be completed that which was defective in his obligatory prayers. Then the rest of his actions will be judged in like fashion. (Hadith Qudsi)

I am as My servant thinks I am. I am with him when he makes mention of Me. If he makes mention of Me to himself, I make mention of him to Myself; and if he makes mention of Me in an

assembly, I make mention of him in an assembly better than it. And if he draws near to Me an arm's length, I draw near to him a fathom's length. And if he comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed. (Hadith Qudsi)

"The best charity is that given to a resentful relative." (Bukhari)

"The best of you are those who live the longest and are the best in character." (Ahmad)

"Faith has over seventy branches, the best of which the declaration that there is no god worthy of worship but Allah, and the simplest of which is removing a bone from the road. And modesty is a branch of faith." (Bukhari)

"The best of you are those best to their women." (Tirmidhi)

"It is not permissible for a Muslim to avoid his (Muslim) brother for more than three days so that when they meet, each turns away from the other. The better one of them is the person who greets the other first." (Tirmidhi)

"The best of people is a believer in the service of two noble parents." (Ahmad)

"The best properties are; a tongue which remembers Allah, a thankful heart and a believing wife who helps [to strengthen] one's faith." (Tirmidhi)

"Shouldn't I inform you of something more excellent in degree than fasting, prayer, and charity?" They said, "Certainly." He said, "To reconcile people. Indeed, spoiling relations between people is [the basis for] destruction." (Abu Dawoud)

"The best of you is one who learns the Quran and teaches it." (Bukhari)

"The best [part] of your religion is piety." (Al-Haakim)

"Do what you can handle, for Allah will not tire of rewarding you until you tire [of doing good]. And the most beloved part of the religion in Allah's sight is what is done regularly." (Bukhari)

"The best (words of remembrance are: Laa ilaaha illal-laah [There is no god worthy of worship but Allah]." (Tirmidhi)

"The further one's [journey] is to the mosque, the greater will be one's reward." (Abu Dawoud)

"The most beloved speech to me is that which is the most truthful." (Bukhari)

"The best [aspect] of faith is patience and tolerance." (Bukhari)

Our Lord (glorified and exalted be He) descends each night to the earth's sky when there remains the final third of the night, and He says: Who is saying a prayer to Me that I may answer it? Who is asking something of Me that I may give it to him? Who is asking forgiveness of Me that I may forgive him? And thus He continues till [the light of] dawn shines. (Hadith Qudsi)

"You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and you believe in Allah." (Quran 3:110)

ISLAMIC DIETARY LAWS

The Miracle of Honey

More than 1,400 years ago Allah and His messenger (PBUH), told us that honey can heal a variety of medical problems.

The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Make use of the two remedies: honey and the Quran." (Tirmithi)

Modern medicine is only just learning of this fact. People knew honey from ancient times and long before they began to process refined sugar.

Honey's natural properties also make it an excellent replenisher and a solvent; it opens the pores of blood vessels and eases menstrual discharge, forces out phlegm, and opens obstruction of the liver, kidney, and bladder.

Honey is abluent and an aperient. It contains detergent and tonic properties that cleanse the arteries and bowels of impurities. It opens obstructions of the liver, kidney, and bladder.

It is also a general preservative, and it helps to preserve the potency of salves among other natural medicinal remedies.

Honey is also a curative for a depraved appetite, and when taken as a drink mixed with hot water and a pomace made from sweet roses, it helps the treatment of rabies, and is considered a safeguard from further infections.

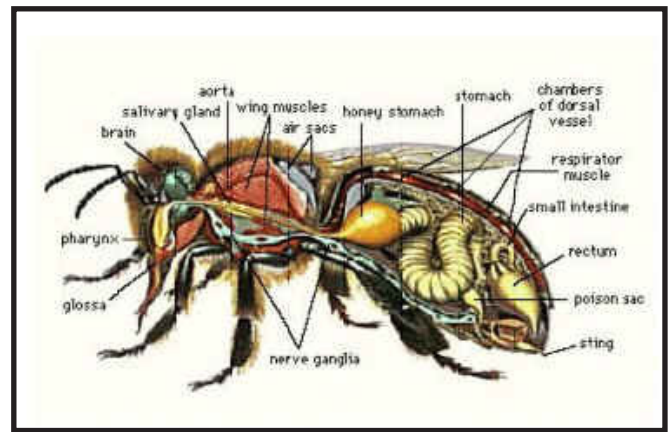
Honey is also used as detoxicant for drug users, and as an antitoxin to treat accidental eating of poisonous plants of the nightshade family (*Hyoscyamus niger*), or wild fungus, among others.

As a preservative, honey can be used to preserve meat for up to three months, and is used in pickling cucumbers, squash, egg-plant, and various kinds of fruits for up to six months. Known as "LIM trustworthy preservative".

Traditional uses of honey have included honey mixed with lemon for sore throats. Honey coats the throat and reduces throat irritation. Research has already shown that honey blocks the growth of oral bacteria. Honey has also been used for stomach pains and problems. Modern research shows that honey is effective when used in the treatment of gastric or peptic stomach ulcers. Research has also revealed that honey is effective in the treatment of various wounds and infections because of its anti-microbial (antibacterial, antiviral, and anti-fungal) properties.

Researchers are not absolutely sure why honey heals but they are learning new things about honey everyday. We do know that honey contains a variety of sugars and minerals. Honey is also considered an antioxidant. This means it allows the blood to circulate better and provide more oxygen to areas of the body such as the brain.

Honey can also be used externally to promote healing when applied to wounds, even postoperative wounds. Honey has also been effective in its use to treat burns. It has even been shown to be low in calories and useful as a sweetener for diabetics, people with heart-disease, or those overweight.



Although there is healing in honey for a variety of medical disorders, certain precautions should be taken. Children under the age of one year never should be given honey due to the possibility of infant botulism.

As Muslims, we must acknowledge and accept that Allah and His Prophet, (PBUH), know better and have revealed the truth. We should, therefore, study the research that is available, not to confirm or deny the truth that has been revealed by Allah (SWT) and his Prophet (PBUH), but to learn of new ways we can use honey.

Allah says in the Quran, ***"And Your lord inspired the bee, to build your dwellings in hills, on trees, and in (human's) habitations. Then, to eat of all the produce and follow the ways of your Lord made easy. There comes forth from their bodies a drink of varying color, wherein is healing for men: Verily, in this is a sign for those who give thought."*** [Qur'an 16:68-69]

The imperative "build" above is the translation of the Arabic word "attakhithi", which is the feminine form (Arabic grammar unlike English, differentiates between the sexes). The feminine form is used when all of those it refers to are female, whereas the masculine is used when a group consists of at least 1 male.

Therefore the Quran is in fact saying "build, you female bees." A swarm of bees, which collect honey and build the hive, are female only.

Thus, the phrasing of this command is in agreement with the scientific fact that male bees do not partake in the construction of the hive. Microscopes were not invented until 1610, when Galileo invented one of the first microscopes almost a thousand years after Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The Prophet (PBUH) has also told us of the healing found within honey for a variety of medical problems, including stomach ailments. One hadeeth, reported by Bukhari, states that a man came to the Prophet (PBUH) because his brother had a stomach disorder. The Prophet said "Let him drink honey."

The man returned a second time and again the Prophet (PBUH), responded again, "Let him drink honey." The man returned again, and said "I have done that". The Prophet then responded, "Allah has said the truth, but your brother's stomach has told a lie. Let him drink honey." He drank it and was cured.

Honey indeed has great nutritional value and is the drink of drinks, a sweetener of sweeteners, an ointment of ointments, and there is no other food among what Allah has created for us that equals honey value, and nothing is close to its constitution.



TRUE STORY...

There was once a man who was an enemy to Islam. He had three questions that no person could answer. No Islamic scholar in Baghdad could answer his three questions... thus he made fun of Islam in public. He constantly ridiculed Islam and the Muslims.

One day a young boy, age 10, came along and heard the man screaming at Muslims in the street. He was challenging people openly to answer the three questions. The boy stood quietly and watched. He then decided that he would challenge the man. He walked up and told the man, "I will accept your challenge". The man laughed at the boy and ridiculed the Muslims even more by saying, "A ten year old boy challenges me. Is this all you people have to offer?" But the boy patiently reiterated his stance. He would challenge the man, and with Allah's help and guidance, he would put this to an end. The man finally accepted.

The entire city gathered around a small "hill" where open addresses were usually made. The Kafir (non-believer) climbed to the top, and in aloud voice asked his first question. "What is your God doing right now?" The small boy thought for a little while and then told the man to climb down the hill and to allow him to go up in order to address the question. The man said, "What? You want me to come down?"

The boy said, "Yes. I need to reply, right?" The man made his way down and the young boy, age 10, with his little feet made his way up. This small child's reply was, "Oh Allah Almighty! You be my witness in front of all these people. You have just willed that a Kafir (non-believer) be brought down to a low level, and that a Muslim be brought to a high level!" The crowd cheered and screamed "Takbir"...."Allah-hu-akbar!!!"

The man was humiliated, but he boldly asked his second question... "What existed before your God?" The small child thought and thought. Then he asked the man to count backwards. "Count from 10 backwards." The man counted..."10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0" The boy asked, "What comes before 0?" The man said, "I don't know...nothing." The boy said, "Exactly. Nothing was before Allah, for He is eternal and absolute." The crowd cheered again...."Takbir!"...."Allah-hu-akbar!!!"

The man, now completely frustrated asked his final question. "In which direction is your Allah facing?" The boy thought and thought. He then asked for a candle. A candle was brought to him. The blessed child handed it to the man and asked him to light it. The man did so and remarked, "What is this supposed to prove?"

The young boy asked, "In which direction is light from the candle going?" The man responded, "It is going in all directions." The boy said, "You have answered your own question. Allah's light goes in all directions. He is everywhere. There is no where that He cannot be found. "The crowd cheered again...."Takbir!"...."Allah-hu-akbar!!!"

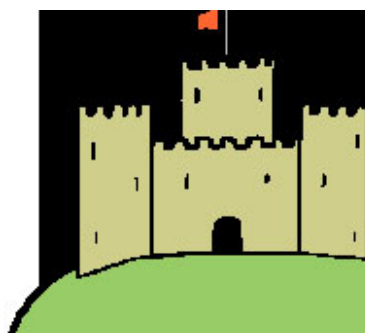
The man was so impressed and so moved by the boy's knowledge and spirituality, that he embraced Islam and became a mureed (student) of the young boy. So ended the debate.

Who was the young boy? The young boy was one of our leaders and one of the greatest scholars, Imam Abu Hanifa, (May Allah bless him), born in Kufa in 80 A.H. (69A.C.), in the reign of Abdul Malik bin Merwan. The Imam went to Medina in 102 A.H., in pursuit of Knowledge and attended the lessons of seven top theologians.

Imam Abu Hanifa has left behind scores of wise sayings some of which are:

- (1) No person has sustained greater loss than that whose learning could not restrain him from indulging in vices.
- (2) A person who talks of religion and does not think that he will have to account for what he says, does not know the meaning of religion and his conscience.
- (3) A person who attains knowledge for the benefit of the world, his knowledge does not take root in his heart.
- (4) To have learned discourses with a person who has no sense of knowledge is to annoy him unnecessarily.

PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH



Once upon a time there lived a little girl named Fatimah who just loved to eat sweets. She would always ask for sweets from her parents.

Fatimah's parents did not want her to eat sweets all the time, but the little girl did not understand this and would insist on eating sweets all the time.

Fatimah's parents thought hard about how to stop her from asking for so many sweets. There was a very religious man living nearby. Fatimah's father had an idea.

He decided to take his little girl to the religious man who might be able to persuade his child to stop asking for sweets all the time.

Fatimah and her father went along to the religious man's house. The father said to him, "O wise man, could you ask my daughter to stop asking for sweets which I can not afford?" The holy man asked the father to bring his daughter back after one month.

After a month, Fatimah and her father returned to the religious man. The man said to the girl, "My dear child, will you stop asking for sweets?" From that day on, Fatimah stopped asking for sweets.

Fatimah's father asked the learned man, "Why did you not ask my daughter to give up asking for sweets when we came to you a month ago?"

The religious man replied, "How could I ask a little girl to give up sweets when I loved sweets myself. In the last month I gave up eating sweets."

A person's example is much more powerful than just his words.

When we ask someone to do something, we must do it ourselves also. We should not ask others to do what we do not do ourselves.



RUZ BUKHARI

By Rukaya Bahamdun

INGREDIENTS

- 1 chicken (cut in serving pieces or 1 lb meat with bones)
- 1 chopped onion
- 1 chopped carrot
- 7 fresh tomatoes (puree in blender)
- Salt, pepper to taste
- ½ teaspoon cumin seeds
- approx. 10-15 whole cardamom seeds
- 10-15 cloves (lightly chop with mortar)
- 1 stick of cinnamon
- 2 cups of washed rice

PREPARATION

1. Sauté onions and carrot in oil.
2. Add chicken or meat and all spices and continue to cook. (You might need to add a little water.)
3. When chicken is halfway done, add the tomato puree. Continue to cook over low heat until chicken is done. Be careful not to overcook.
4. Remove chicken from pot and set aside.
5. Now add rice to pot and cook on low until just barely cooked. You might need to add ½ cup water for rice to be done. Please be careful not to overcook rice because you do not want mushy rice.

To serve, place rice on platter and add chicken on top.

Optional-Garnish with fried almonds and raisins on top for a most exquisite and delicious dish.

ENJOY!

THIS IS ISLAM - THE ONLY WAY FOR THIS LIFE AND THE HEREAFTER

WHAT IS LIFE?

Man's existence in this world and the creation of this entire universe are not mere accidents or products of a fortuitous nature. This universe, every single atom of it, manifests and leads us to the realization of a Loving, Merciful, and All-powerful Creator. Without a Creator, nothing can exist. Every single soul knows that he is existing and that his existence is dependent upon a Creator he knows for sure that he cannot create himself. Therefore it is his duty to know his master, the Creator.

MANKIND

Man is a unique creature. God establishes man as His representative or deputy to govern over all other creatures in this world.

He is endowed with the faculty of REASON which sets him apart from all other animals. Together with this faculty to discriminate and discern, man is given the freedom (free-will) to choose for himself a way of life worthy of his position as God's representative or to fall lower than the lowest of all animals or creations. Man is born pure and sinless and is given the choice to do righteous deeds or indulge in sins.

DIVINE GUIDANCE

The Creator, out of His abundant Love and Mercy for mankind has not left us in darkness to discover the right path by trial and error alone. Coupled with our intellectual capability to reason, our Creator bestowed upon us DIVINE GUIDANCE that outlines the Criterion for TRUTH, knowledge, as well as the reality of our existence in this world and the Hereafter.

REVELATIONS

From the beginning of mankind, our Creator sent prophets to convey His REVELATION and to invite human beings to the path of true PEACE and OBEDIENCE to the ONE TRUE GOD. This is ISLAM. This message is conveyed towards successive generations of man through the different prophets, all inviting mankind to the same path. However all the earlier messages or revelations from God were distorted by people of later generations.

As a result, pure Revelation from our Creator was adulterated and polluted with myths, superstitions, idol worship and irrational philosophical ideologies. The religion of God in a sense was lost in a plethora of religions. Human history is a testament of man's drift between light and darkness, but God out of His Abundant Love for mankind has not forsaken us.

FINAL REVELATIONS

When mankind was in the depths of the Dark Ages, our Creator sent His final Messenger, prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon him) to redeem humanity with the final revelation which represents the ultimate and permanent source of guidance for the whole world.

CRITERIA FOR TRUTH

The following criteria can best serve as a gauge to find out the authenticity of the last revelation (the Qur'an) as words of God:

1. Rational Teachings: Since our Creator bestowed reason and intellect upon us, it is our duty to use it to distinguish the TRUTH from falsehood. True, undistorted revelation from God must be rational and can be reasoned out by all unbiased minds.
2. Perfection: Since our Creator is all perfect, His revelation must be perfect and accurate, free from mistakes, omissions, interpolations, and multiplicity of versions. It should be free from contradictions in its narration.
3. No Myths or Superstitions: True revelation is free from myths or superstitions that degrade the dignity of our Creator or man himself.
4. Scientific: Since our Creator is the Creator of all knowledge, true

revelation is scientific and can withstand the challenge of science at all times.

5. Factual Prophecy: Our Creator is the Knower of the past, present and future. Thus His prophecies in His revelation will be fulfilled as prophesied.

6. Inimitable By Man: True revelation is infallible and cannot be imitated by man. God's true revelation is a Living miracle, an open book challenging all mankind to see and prove for themselves its authenticity or veracity.

Can we find an explanation of the great universe? Is there any convincing interpretation of the secret of its existence? We realize that no family can function properly without a responsible head, that no city can prosperously exist without sound administration, and that no state can survive without a leader of some kind. We also realize that nothing comes into being on its own.

Moreover, we observe that the universe exists and functions in the most orderly manner, and that it has survived for hundreds of thousands of years. Can we, then, say that all this is accidental and haphazard? Can we attribute the existence of man and the whole world to a mere chance? Man represents only a very small portion of the great universe, and if he can make plans and appreciate the merits of planning, then his own existence and the survival of the universe must also be based on a planned policy.

This means that there is a Designing Will behind our material existence, and that there is an extraordinary power to bring things into being and keep them moving in order. In the world there must be a Great Force in action to keep everything in order. In the beautiful nature there must be a Great Creator who makes the great charming pieces of art and produces everything for a special purpose in life.

The deeply enlightened people recognize this creator and call Him Allah. He is not a man because no man can create or make another man. He is not an animal, nor is He a plant. He is neither an Idol nor is He a Statue of any kind, because none of these things can make itself or create anything else. He is different from all these things, because He is the maker and Keeper of them all. The Maker of anything must be different and greater than the things that he makes.

There are various ways to know "Allah" and there are many things to tell about Him. The great wonders and impressive marvels of the world are like open books in which we can read about Him. Besides, Allah comes to our aid through the many messengers and revelations He has sent down to humanity. These messengers and revelation tell us everything we need to know about our Creator.

The complete acceptance of the teachings and guidance of our Creator as revealed to all His messengers (Peace Be Upon Them) is the religion of Islam. Islam enjoins faith in the oneness and the sovereignty of Allah, which makes man aware of the meaningfulness of the universe and of his place in it. This belief frees the human being from all fears and superstitions as it makes him conscious of the presence of the Almighty Allah, and of his obligation towards Him.

This faith must be expressed and tested in action, for faith alone is not

enough. Belief in one God "Allah" requires that we look upon all humanity as one family under the universal Omnipotence of the Creator, and Nourisher of all. Islam rejects the idea of a chosen people while on the other hand, it approves that belief in the Creator, and doing righteous deeds is the only way to heaven. Thus, a direct relationship is established with Allah and without any intercessor at that.

Islam is not a new religion. It is, in essence, the same message and guidance which Allah revealed to all His prophets, like Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, David, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Them). But the message which was revealed to prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him) is Islam in its comprehensive, complete and final form.

The Qur'an is the revealed words of Allah and the basic source of Islamic teachings and Laws. It deals with the basis of creeds, morality, history of humanity, worship, knowledge, wisdom, god-man relation, and human relationship in all aspects-comprehensive teachings of which, can be built sound systems and social justice, economics, politics, legislation, jurisprudence, law and international relations, all of which are important contents of the Qur'an.

The Hadith, which contains the teachings, sayings, approvals and actions of prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him) meticulously reported and collected by his devoted companions, explains and elaborates the Quranic verses.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ARTICLES OF FAITH IN ISLAM (THE BELIEF)

The true Muslim believes in the following principal articles of faith:

1. Believes in one God Supreme and Eternal, Infinite and Mighty, Merciful and Compassionate, The Creator and The Provider, He begets not, nor was He begotten, and there is none equal or comparable unto Him.
2. Believes in all Messengers of Allah without any discrimination among them, as every known nation has a Warner or messenger from Allah. They were chosen by Allah to teach humanity and deliver His Divine message. The Qur'an mentions the name of some of them, and Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) stands as the last messenger.
3. Believes in all original scriptures and revelations of Allah, accepting them as the guiding light that the messengers received to show their respective people the right path to Him. In the Qur'an, special reference is made to the books of Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus (Peace Be Upon Them), but long before the revelation of the Qur'an to Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) some of these books and revelations had been lost or corrupted. The only authentic and complete book of Allah in existence today is the Qur'an, which has been preserved as it was revealed to prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) in its pristine, pure form.
4. Believes in the angels of Allah, recognizing them as purely spiritual and splendid beings whose nature requires no food or drink or sleep. They are honored servants who are assigned certain functions, and spend their days and nights in the worship of Allah. They do not speak before Allah does, and they act only by His command.

5. Believes in the last day of Judgment, acknowledging that this world will end someday, and that the dead will rise to stand for their final and fair trial. People with good records will be generously rewarded and warmly welcomed to the heaven of Allah, and those with bad records will be punished and cast into Hell.

6. Believes in Fate, whether good or bad, which Allah, measured and ordained for all creatures according to his previous knowledge, and as deemed suitable by his wisdom. And in the timeless knowledge of Allah, and in His power to plan and execute His plans, nothing could happen in His Kingdom against His will. His knowledge and power which are always in action command over His creation. He is wise and merciful, and whatever he does must have a meaningful purpose. If this is established in our minds and hearts, we should accept with good faith all that He does, although we may fail to understand it fully, or think it is bad. Faith without action and practice is a dead end as far as Islam is concerned, for faith by nature is very sensitive and can be most influential. When it is out of practice or out of use, it quickly loses its liveliness and motivational power.

THERE ARE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM (THE ACTION)

1. Shahada (Testimony): To bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah (The Creator), and that Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him) is His messenger, with the Prophethood of Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him) essentially professed to oblige the Muslims to follow his exemplary life as a model.

2. Salah (Prayer): Daily prayers are offered five times a day as a duty towards Allah. They strengthen and enliven the belief in Allah and inspire man to a higher morality. They purify the heart and prevent temptation towards wrong-doings and evil things. They are: - Fajr (The Dawn prayer) - Duhr (The noon prayer) - Asr (The afternoon prayer) - Maghrib (The sunset prayer) - Isha (The evening prayer).

3. Zakah (Charity): The literal and simple meaning of Zakah is purity, while its technical meaning designates the annual amount in kind or cash that a Muslim with means must distribute among the rightful beneficiaries from his yearly net savings at 2.5%. But the religious and spiritual significance of Zakah is much deeper and more valuable than its Humanitarian, and socio-political value.

4. Sawm (Fasting): The Muslims during the month of Ramadan do not only abstain from food, drink and sexual intercourse from dawn to sunset but they are also required to abstain from evil intentions and desires throughout the whole months of the year in general, and during the month of Ramadan in particular. It teaches love, sincerity, and devotion, and develops a sound social conscience, patience, selflessness, and will power as well.

5. Hajj (Pilgrimage to Makkah): It is to be performed once in a lifetime, so long as one can afford it financially and physically, and it is the largest annual convention of faith where Muslims meet to know one another, study their common affairs and promote their general welfare without prejudice or bias as to one's color, race, nationality as well as status in life. After all, everyone is equal in the face of Allah, and so hajj therefore demonstrates in effect the

universality of Islam and the brotherhood and equality of Muslims.

THE STRANGER...

A few months before I was born, my dad met a stranger who was new to our small town. From the beginning, Dad was fascinated with this enchanting newcomer, and soon invited him to live with our family. The stranger was quickly accepted and was around to welcome me into the world a few months later.

As I grew up I never questioned his place in our family. In my young mind, each member had a special niche. My brother, Bilal, five years my senior, was my example. Fatimah, my younger sister, gave me an opportunity to play 'big brother' and develop the art of teasing. My parents were complementary instructors- Mom taught me to love the word of Allah, and Dad taught me to obey it.

But the stranger was our storyteller. He could weave the most fascinating tales. Adventures, mysteries, and comedies were daily conversations. He could hold our whole family spell-bound for hours each evening. If I wanted to know about politics, history, or science, he knew it. He knew about the past, understood the present, and seemingly could predict the future. The pictures he could draw were so life like that I would often laugh or cry as I watched. He was like a friend to the whole family. He took Dad, Bilal and me to our first major league baseball game. He was always encouraging us to see the movies and he even made arrangements to introduce us to several movie stars. The stranger was an incessant talker. Dad didn't seem to mind - but sometimes Mom would quietly get up - while the rest of us were enthralled with one of his stories of faraway places - go to her room, read her Quran and pray. I wonder now if she ever prayed that the stranger would leave.

You see, my dad ruled our household with certain moral convictions. But this stranger never felt obligation to honor them. Profanity, for example, was not allowed in our house - not from us, from our friends, or adults. Our longtime visitor, however, used occasional four letter words that turned my ears and made Dad squirm. To my knowledge the stranger was never confronted. My dad was a teetotaler who didn't permit alcohol in his home - as good Muslims should. But the stranger felt like we needed exposure and enlightened us to other ways of life. He offered us, cigarettes, beer, and other alcoholic beverages often. He talked freely (probably much too freely) about sex. His comments were sometimes blatant, sometimes suggestive, and generally embarrassing. I know now that the stranger influenced my early concepts of the man-woman relationship.

As I look back, I believe it was the grace of Allah that the stranger did not influence us more. Time after time he opposed the values of my parents. Yet he was seldom rebuked and never asked to leave. More than thirty years have passed since the stranger moved in with the young family on Wangee Road. He is not nearly so intriguing to my Dad as he was in those early years. But if I were to walk into my parents' den today, you would still see him sitting over in a corner, waiting for someone to listen to him talk and watch him draw his pictures... His name you ask? We called him TV.